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ABSTRACT

This publication documents the presentations, papers, and discussions of two workshops. On theme 4, "Adult Learning, Gender Equality and Equity and the Empowerment of Women," of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education: "Women's Education: The Contending Discourses and Possibilities for Change" and "Raising Gender Issues in Different Educational Settings." An introduction is followed by "By Way of Introduction to Workshop 1" (Nelly Stromquist) that discusses what gender means. "Two Different Voices on Education for Women's Empowerment" (Sara Hlupekile Longwe) reflects on the two contending discourses on women's education and empowerment. "Learning Literacy Strategies from Indian Women" (Malini Ghose) describes innovative strategies that evolved with women in literacy classes. "Incorporating Women's Experiences of Violence in Literacy Work" (Jennifer Horsman) expounds on the importance of addressing the issue of violence against women. "Women's Education in the Caribbean: Issues and Possibilities" (Anne Marie Smith) maintains that access to education equals access to the labor market by showing a picture of the Caribbean situation. "Discussion of Workshop 1" explores numerous topics raised by the papers. Workshop 2 is composed of six papers. Two papers, "Some Reflections on the UNESCO PROAP [Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific] and ASPBAE [Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education] Research on Girls' and Women's Education" and "Bridging the Gap between the Intention and Action: An Overview of Girls' and Women's Access to Basic Education in South Asia" (Vimla Ramachandran) share results of a four-country research project that indicates many excellent policy documents have been developed but not implemented. "Engendering African Education: Some Reflections" (Essi Sutherland-Addy) highlights the Forum of African Women Educationalists and gives the author's thoughts on African education. "Engendering African Education: A Concept Paper" (Sheila Parvyn Wamahiu) underscores the importance of including gender in the development of education. "Addressing Emotional Subordination in Our Education Work" (Lean Chan Heng) points out the importance of empowering women workers. "Enabling Women's Leadership in Chile" (Alejandra Valdez)

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shares experiences in conducting women's leadership training, raising the importance of addressing identity and individuation issues. "Discussion of Workshop 2" concludes the publication. (YLB)

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LEARNING GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH WOMEN'S DISCOURSES

Report of Theme IV

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PREFACE

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) held in Hamburg, Germany, from July 14 to 18, 1997, provided another venue for women all over the world to discuss and promote issues crucial to their lives. With its focus on adult learning, CONFINTEA V was one of the important spaces for women to make their voices heard, especially as all the previous international conferences talked about the role of women's education vis-a-vis different societal issues from human rights to reproductive health and from environment to social development.

Given the encompassing role of women's education, it was therefore a challenge to deal with this area in such an international meeting. The women did not want to be relegated to discussing the education of women without being able to talk about democracy or the economics of adult learning. There was the perennial dilemma of being in the women's workshops and women's caucus versus being in the important decision-making bodies of the drafting committee or the commissions or in other workshops on literacy, population, environment and work. This was always a difficult decision for women who felt that they had to occupy all spaces.

In the end, with GENDER JUSTICE as their slogan, the women did magnificently,whether in the caucus, the workshops, the drafting committee, making speeches, giving proposals or simply working together. Their participation in the preparation for CONFINTEA V as well as in the actual event made significant difference to the proposals and the manner in which this meeting was conducted. It was inspiring to see women in government work with their women NGO counterparts, and it was equally heartening to see the men work by our side.

This report is only able to capture a part of that story, a fragment of the work that the women have put in. It documents the presentations, papers and discussions of the two workshops on ***Theme 4: ADULT LEARNING, GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN,*** organized by the UIE in cooperation with women's organizations and networks. With this report, we hope that more organized efforts will be undertaken to follow-up on CONFINTEA V, especially those that attempt to mainstream the gender perspective in the adult education agenda that came out of Hamburg.

Through the financial support of the Ministry of Development Cooperation of the Dutch government, NOVIB, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, we were able to ensure that more women came to Hamburg. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Norwegian government provided assistance so that this report could be reproduced so that those who were unable to come to CONFINTEA V could have access to some of the most interesting discussions on women's education and the need for a gender perspective in adult education.

Finally this publication has benefited from the editorial and translation assistance of Henrike Evers and technical support of my colleagues from the Institute, Cendrine Sebastiani, Peter Nelke and Suzanne Musiol.

Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo
Senior Research Specialist on Women's Education
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INTRODUCTION

It has always been assumed that education improves the lives of people and paves the way for more democratic communities. For women, several researches have demonstrated how access to education is correlated with a decline in birth rate or an improvement of children's well-being. That two thirds of the world's 800 million illiterates are women is also an indication of how millions of women, in this age of information superhighways, are still deprived of a basic human right. Such measurements, while necessary, present only a partial picture of a complex ideological, political and psychological process that women go through in their educational systems.

The two workshops, "Women's Education: The Contending Discourses and Possibilities for Change" and "Raising Gender Issues in Different Educational Settings" were envisioned to help in providing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of education on adult women and consequently on society. Bringing together women from different regions working on a range of areas and spaces, the workshops were meant to stimulate more discussion on what concretely could be done. By articulating our own concepts, discourses and practices, we hoped to have distilled good practices and conceptual tools that could be used to further our main goal, a transformed society where gender justice prevails.

The issues raised and the experiences shared in this collection are not exactly new or unique. As one reads through, topics like access, empowerment, learning environments, innovative strategies will be familiar. What is distinct about this collection is that these discussions have taken place in the context of (1) deconstructing adult learning, a field which is undergoing fast changes in itself and therefore demands new interpretations, (2) mutual exchanges among educators, trainers and policy makers in government, NGOs and universities and (3) globalization that has rapidly transformed societies and the way women and men live, work and learn, giving rise to new problems as well as new opportunities.

The constant shift and negotiation from adult education to adult learning seemed imperceptible and unimportant to many. Critics point out that use of the concept adult learning is too individually focused while those who take on the term adult education are said to be too system-oriented. In fact, we need these two terms. We need the concept of learning to denote not only the complex psychological processes that take place when individual women gain new knowledge but also their emotional make-up when they come to such environments. We also need to find out what women are learning. In literacy classes, are women learning to become more docile in accepting traditional roles or are they gaining self-confidence to help them get out of these stereotype roles? In leadership workshops, are women learning how to become oppressors themselves or have they grasped the need for empowerment that transforms not only individuals but also others, groups, communities and societies?

Despite this broader vision of adult learning, we can not do away with the concept of education as it describes systems and structures in society. We need to understand the nature of education women are given and the place where they find themselves in the labour market. We have to see how different educational institutions continue to reproduce gender inequalities whether it be in the curriculum or in the materials used or in the educational environment itself.

The mix of presenters and moderators has also allowed us to delve more into the relationship of adult education and adult learning as the discussions brought to fore the rich experiences of the women. Our moderators, **Nelly Stromquist**, a professor at the University of Southern California and **Thais Corral**, a known feminist from Brazil, representing ***REPEM*** (the Latin American women's education network) facilitated the discussions that allowed women in the audience to bring in their experiences as well.

From Africa, we are proud to have been able to involve two of the most important networks, ***FEMNET*** and ***FAWE***. **Sara Longwe** of Zambia, who is Chairperson of FEMNET presented her reflections on the two contending discourses on women's education and empowerment, which could also speak to women outside Africa. **Sheila Wamahiu** of FAWE prepared a paper on engendering African education but herself could not attend. **Esi Sutherland Addy** from the University of Ghana, in addition to presenting the highlights of FAWE's presentation also gave her own thoughts on African education.

There were three presentations from Asia. **Vimala Ramachandran** shared the results of a four country research project conducted by ***ASPBAE*** (Asian South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education). She explained that although there are many excellent policy documents in place, there is very little implementation of the policies. Meanwhile, **Malini Ghose** from India described the innovative strategies ***NIRANTAR*** had evolved with women in literacy classes. Based on her experiences with women workers in Malaysia, **Lean Chan Heng** pointed out the importance of incorporating the idea of emotional subordination of women in education work so that this could be addressed. In the same vein, **Jennifer Horsman**, an educator, researcher and curriculum writer from Canada, expounded on the importance of addressing the issue of violence against women in literacy classes.

Anne Marie Smith from the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of West Indies debunked the myth that access to education equals access to the labour market by showing a more nuance picture of the Carribean situation where indeed women have access to education but are marginalised when it comes to non-traditional job opportunities. **Alejandra Valdez** from Chile shared her experiences in conducting women's leadership training where the importance of addressing identity and individuation issues was raised.

While the women talked about a variety of issues, in the end it was clear that all of them were interrelated. One cannot address an issue without fully understanding its relationship to the others. In one way, this is also what we have to confront with globalization – our interrelatedness, our interconnectedness. Globalization is both hailed as a panacea and as an evil. One can argue that while it has allowed countries, markets, communities, families and individuals to be integrated, it has also effectively marginalised and excluded those who do not have the skills, competencies, the resources and the information to remain in the circle.

For part of the world population, it appears that access to education and training will solve this exclusion. The presentations and the ensuing discussion have showed that the relationship is a more complex one. The recommendations demonstrate that solutions are not wanting. What is needed is more political will from governments and more collective mobilization from civil society to show that indeed women's education is our strategy in obtaining gender justice.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION TO WORKSHOP 1

Nelly Stromquist

As a starting point for today's panel, I would like to reflect on a comment that someone from UNESCO made to me last night, knowing that this panel would take place. If he had not been from UNESCO, I probably would have let his comment go, but since it is an educational institution, I decided to share this remark with you. He said to me: "Why do you keep on talking about women? Why don't you talk about gender?" So I would therefore like to introduce this session by briefly discussing what gender means.

I think that in the social-political context of the discourse these days it can have three possible meanings. The first one refers to the unequal relations between women and men which, of course, create problems and disadvantages for women. And vice versa: to talk about these disadvantages is hardly independent of gender relations. One might have a different emphasis in what is happening to women, but their conditions are the product of the relations between men and women. So even if you may not have an explicit focus on women, talking about women does not necessarily mean that you have avoided talking about gender. So this is one meaning.

The second meaning - and this is supported by both, men and women - refers to the fact that we should be paying more attention to the creation, the development and the persistence of masculinities. How those masculinities are created and how men are socialized into assuming dominant roles. This is a relatively new area within gender studies, which is being examined. There is an increasing amount of research on the construction of masculinities and femininities. Nevertheless, this session does not deal with the construction of masculinities.

The third point about gender is subtly (not explicitly!) making reference to men and to the issue that we should talk more about men and how they also suffer. "Men are not always dominant" says this third point and "men are also sometimes hurt by policies that try to promote women". So the argument is that both, men and women, suffer. Obviously this point here, that both men and women suffer, amounts to a disclaimer of the situation or condition in which women find themselves vis-a-vis men. In some cases it is even stronger than that, in the sense that it is a denial of the role that men have in some of their subordination of women. I would like to say that this third position regarding gender amounts to the exploitation of the new concept gender; it is a misuse of the concept gender.

This afternoon we are going to have four speakers who will surely delight you with their own research and their own perspectives. First, we will have a more theoretical analysis of the problematic situation of women. Then we will move on to different educational settings, one of which deals with the presence of trauma and its effects on learning. In my opinion, this is a very important contribution as we usually ignore or push aside the influence of psychological aspects if we come across them in our research. We then say: "We are here to focus on education, not on psycho-emotional issues".

TWO DIFFERENT VOICES ON EDUCATION FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Sara Hlupekile Longwe

My paper is about two competing voices on education for women's empowerment. It is divided into five sections, the first of which gives examples of exchanges between these two perspectives while the next part examines the discourses of empowerment emanating from these two voices. Section three looks at education as disempowerment while the fourth part presents the differences between self-reliance and empowerment. The conclusion focuses on the challenges of making education genuinely empowering to women.

1. TWO DIFFERENT VOICES

In the discourse on women's education for empowerment, there are two distinct voices often heard. Two opposite voices, with two different vocabularies, based on two different sets of assumptions. Two voices describing two different sorts of education, for two different sorts of empowerment.

Let us listen to the sound of the two voices talking. Not talking to each other, but talking past each other. They cannot talk to each other, because the two voices are speaking two different languages.

a) Education opens the door

First Voice (FV): Education enables women to take advantage of all the opportunities available. When women have the necessary knowledge and skills, they can open any door, and attain equal footing with men.

Second Voice(SV): Women can only attain equal footing with men if there is equality of opportunity. It is hopeless to pretend that there is equality of opportunity when this is plainly not the case. Education can get women only so far, within the strict limits set by patriarchal society. Systemic gender discrimination is the reason why women cannot attain equal footing with men. In the North there is limited equality of opportunity, within an unofficial 'glass ceiling'. In Africa, there is explicit gender discrimination, often legalised, which holds women back in all areas of economic and political advancement.

b) Education is empowering

FV: Women can be empowered by giving them education. To gain more power they need more skills, more information, and more knowledge of how society works. Therefore education will lead to empowerment.

SV: No one person can empower another. Power cannot be given, it can only be taken. It is in the nature of political power that it is not given away by those who have it. Education that is empowering has to be taken. Education that is given by the powerful to the powerless is education for subordination (more properly called schooling). Education is only empowering if it is closely allied to the process of political struggle, i.e. the process of taking power.

c) More educated women needed for parliament

FV: There is a small proportion of women in parliament because of their lower levels of education. Increasing the number of highly educated women will increase their proportion in parliament, and in the higher levels of government.

SV: There is no basis for the argument that there are few women in parliament because there are few who are highly educated. There is no causal connection between education and getting a seat in parliament, as is evidenced by the number of men in parliament who are poorly educated, and in some cases even illiterate. One might more plausibly argue the opposite - that there is a smaller proportion of women amongst the highly educated because women have always been few in parliament.

The argument that women need more education to get into parliament is unsound reasoning. There may be a correlation between the smaller proportion of women amongst the educated and the smaller proportion of women in parliament. But such a correlation does not establish any causal connection. It would be more sensible to look for some common outside cause of the correlation between education level and representation in parliament.

For example one might argue that there are fewer women in parliament because there is gender discrimination in access to such bodies and similarly there are fewer women with higher education because their is gender discrimination in access to higher education. The main reason for the generally small proportion of women in parliament in the Third World is that the male political establishment has many ways of keeping them out. It is these discriminatory practices which women need to recognise and address if they are to increase their representation in parliament. The argument about educational levels is irrelevant.

d) Women in government will end gender discrimination

FV: Educated women in positions of power will act to end public discrimination against women, and contribute to the general improvement of the position of women.

SV: Within the present patriarchal system, educated women obtain positions of power by being co-opted into the patriarchal establishment as 'honorary males'. Their promotion to such positions, and their continued occupation of them, depend on their defending the patriarchal establishment, and keeping quiet about women's rights. A few women may be allowed into the political arena, provided they support the patriarchal establishment, and find their place within it. Such women are very often the loudest in defending male privilege.

e) Women need leadership training

FV: Women are poorly represented in national leadership because they have little experience of leadership positions, and are lacking in the skills of public speaking and leadership. Generally they are not confident and assertive enough to compete with men in public life. Therefore leadership training for women will increase their number in government.

SV: There are already plenty of women with good leadership qualities. The main reason for the small number of women in government is that, given the unequal gender division of labour, women are constantly

busy with their burden of domestic work and child care, so that they do not have time for public affairs. Politics, like sport and drinking, are leisure activities for men which are financed by the unpaid labour of women. A second reason is that, in the corrupt politics of Africa, considerable wealth is needed to finance a political career. But money is controlled by men.

When all else fails, men keep women out of politics by a range of 'dirty tricks' which are directed at women with political ambitions - especially women who espouse women's rights!

f) The Economic value of schooling

FV: Schooling is an investment for economic growth. Women are poorer than men because they have less formal schooling. Therefore increased schooling for women will increase the wealth of women.

SV: Women have less formal schooling because they are poor, they are not poor because they have less schooling. High levels of education in the Third World do not create wealth, they legitimate existing inequalities in wealth. Families are not rich because they have more certificates. Rich families have more certificates because they can afford such things, and because certificates can be used to legitimate their positions of power, and their privileges. Moreover, a certificate can legitimate the position of a man, not a woman. For a woman, other rules apply!

g) Schooling and access to resources

FV: Increased formal schooling will enhance women's access to resources and formal employment. With more information women will have greater access to resources; with better qualifications, women will have increased access to jobs. With more education, women will have improved confidence to take advantage of opportunities.

SV: The important reason for women's lack of access to resources and formal employment is not lack of education, but rather that the patriarchal establishment discriminates against women in having access to resources. Therefore education will not make much difference. In addition, the main effect of formal schooling is to educate women to accept a subordinate position in society, and accept these discriminatory practices instead of fighting them. Schooling is therefore a main cause of women's lack of access to resources and education.

h) Productive skills

FV: Women are poorer than men because they have less productive knowledge and skills. Therefore adult education for women must focus on functional literacy and productive skills.

SV: Women are more productive than men because they have better productive knowledge and skills than men. They are poorer because men control their labour, and the income which results from their labour. Therefore education for women's increased productivity will allow men increased exploitation of women's more efficient labour.

i) Gender discrimination is irrational

FV: Gender discrimination arises from irrational prejudice, and can be eliminated by

increased and improved education for everybody. Education improves rationality.

SV: Patriarchal ideology has its own rationality, and has to be understood from the inside. Within patriarchal ideology, gender discrimination is justified as a rational division of labour, where inequality and injustice are denied. Discrimination against women is practised and perpetuated by some of the most highly educated, including those with high levels of legal education. In any case, education may improve rationality, but schooling tends to increase irrationality.

j) Gender equality will be better for both sides

FV: Men can be educated to understand that they will be better off in a society where women and men are equal. Gender equality will enable women to be more productive, and to achieve their full potential, so that all of society will be better off.

SV: Men will not be easily persuaded to relinquish their privileges, which carry with them the satisfaction of wielding power over women in both the home and in the wider society. This power gives them considerable material advantage, arising from their exploitation of female labour, and their privileged position in the allocation of resources. Moreover, men have been educated to believe that their privileges are 'right' and 'natural', and they will not easily be persuaded to accept beliefs which contradict their material interests. Men may suffer less psychological stress if they do not have to assume a dominant position over women. But materially, they are likely to be worse off if they have to share resources equally, and cannot exploit the unpaid labour of women.

Realistically, we have to anticipate that men will resist gender equality. Therefore we must be prepared for their resistance, and their strategies. We must prepare our counter arguments, and our counter strategies.

2. THE DISCOURSES ON EMPOWERMENT

How do we explain the two voices, with their two different discourses? They are built on two different perspectives on what is meant by women's empowerment. The **First Voice** sees women's empowerment as increased self-reliance within the present social system. The **Second Voice** sees women's empowerment as being essentially concerned with transformation of the present social system.

Let us look more closely at these two different voices on the meaning of empowerment.

First Voice: Empowerment as individual self-reliance

A woman is empowered when she is able to make the best of her own life. A woman is empowered when she has literacy, education, productive skills, access to capital, confidence in herself, and so on. Then she can 'get ahead' on the basis of her own qualifications and ability. Such a woman has been 'empowered'.

Examples of empowered women are those individual female entrepreneurs and professional women who have gone ahead of their sisters by improving their access to resources, and utilisation of these resources. Other women need to follow their example.

Second Voice: Critique of self-reliance

Treating empowerment as self-reliance entails a fatally limited view of what is needed for women's empowerment. It is a perspective based on the advancement of the individual, without any societal perspective of the problem. It is concerned with enabling women to advance within society, rather than through structural transformation.

It ignores the extent to which the 'empowered' woman remains restricted by gender discrimination. It fails to address the gender dimension, since it does not address the question of whether a man, with the same access to resources as the 'empowered' woman, actually occupies a more privileged position in terms of control over income, social status and political position in society.

This limited view of empowerment, as individual self-reliance, has no potential for recognising or addressing the question of how a woman can gain increased access to resources if the hurdles of gender discrimination remain in place. If proponents of the 'self-reliance model' admit that gender discrimination needs to be removed, this model of empowerment provides no understanding of the problem of structural inequality, and no understanding of the development process by which such structural inequality can be dismantled.

There seems to be an implicit assumption, within the 'self-reliance model', that women's increased access to resources is going to be 'given' by the men presently in control. (Explain it to them nicely!)

But in politics nothing is given. Empowerment involves the process of taking. Or, more precisely, empowerment means generating enough political mobilisation and organisation so that we are in a position to take. If we wait to be given, definitely we shall wait forever.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the 'self-reliance model' ignores the extent to which the 'empowered' woman has gone ahead at the expense of her sisters, for example by exploiting their cheap labour, or by being adopted as an 'honorary male' or a 'token female' within the patriarchal system.

If 'self-reliance' is used interchangeably with 'empowerment', this entails a watering down - even corruption - of the vocabulary for women's advancement.

The perspective of 'self-reliance' has no theoretical power for exploring the political and ideological dimensions of women's empowerment. It should be understood as part of a watered down vocabulary for getting the awkward question of women's empowerment off of the political agenda. It is part of the vocabulary of a shallow discourse which has considerable potential for sidetracking and betraying the women's struggle.

First Voice: Take advantage of the opportunity

In most countries now, women have considerable equality of opportunity under the law. Governments are committed to the Beijing Platform for Action, and things are changing. If there are still discriminatory practices, they are remnants from the past. They will fall away as we demand our rights, and make our own space.

Therefore all this political talk about needing more power is unhelpful, and only causes male resistance. Once we have the knowledge and skills, then we shall automatically be able to take our equal place in government and ensure that women's needs are addressed in national policies, and that there is gender equality in the allocation of resources.

Therefore the project of women's empowerment merely entails taking the space which is now available to us, by taking advantage of equality of opportunity. For this, we need better education and training. Men have the advantage because of the imbalances of the past, where they had better access to education and training. If we can get level with them in knowledge and skills, we shall be able to fill the equal space in society which is now available to us.

Second Voice: First we must get equality of opportunity

You may think there is equality of opportunity. Perhaps in the North this is largely true. To a large extent you now have gender equality written in the Constitution, and in the law of the land. You also have equal opportunity legislation, where discrimination against women in many areas of public life, including education and employment, has become illegal.

Perhaps, in the North, to a large extent, you can use your new access to education and training as the basis for equal access to the political sphere. Perhaps. But I think you need to look more closely at the residual and covert elements of the patriarchal state. You need to constantly examine whether you are being co-opted into a patriarchal society, instead of slowly creating a feminist society.

But in Africa, the situation is very different. In many African countries the government ideology is overtly patriarchal. There are many discriminatory laws on the statute book, which largely restrict women to the domestic sphere, and to domination and exploitation by men. In these countries the government does not claim that these laws are outdated and will be repealed. On the contrary, these laws are defended, and women are told to keep their place. In some countries discriminatory laws and practices are being extended, and women are being increasingly pushed back into the kitchen.

In other African countries, supposedly more liberal, there is mere lip-service to the Beijing Platform for Action. Many discriminatory laws remain on the statute book, but governments claim that there is equality of opportunity when this is far from being the case. Worse than that, apparent equality in some areas of statutory law exists side-by-side with customary law, which legitimates all sorts of gender discrimination, including horrific sexual abuse and genital mutilation of women.

Therefore, in Africa, empowerment doesn't mean finding your space within the present system. Empowerment means transforming the social system, so that you can find some space. Women's empowerment means the process by which women collectively come to recognise and address the gender issues which stand in way of their advancement. In a patriarchal society, these gender issues are the practices of gender discrimination which are entrenched in custom, law and ideological belief.

3. EDUCATION FOR DISEMPOWERMENT

I had better admit, in case the reader hasn't yet guessed, that I belong with the **Second Voice**! The **First Voice** is what I usually hear from educationists on the subject of women's education.

The trouble with educationists is that they tend to have too much faith in education, as the means to solve all problems. Rather worse than that, they have too much faith in schooling as a means for education. Schooling is innocently regarded as a means for providing the next generation with the knowledge and skills to make them productive members of society. Further than that, in Africa, adult education is seen as an extension of schooling. Adult education is seen as a way of providing literacy, knowledge and skills to those who missed out on schooling, or were pushed out early.

Even if empowerment could be obtained by productive knowledge and skills, African schools do not provide them. African schools are a selection system which throw out the majority of students in a 'half-baked' condition, half-way prepared for the white collar jobs that they will never obtain. They are unprepared and mis-prepared for the productive work, on the land and in the home, which is their actual vocational future.

This 'push-out' system continues because it legitimates the position and rewards of the few who succeed to the top of the schooling pyramid. (The World Bank apparently thinks this institutionalised lunacy is an investment for economic growth!). Therefore, adult education which in any way emulates and extends the school system is also, automatically, dysfunctional.

Schools are particularly dysfunctional for girls. Schools are patriarchal establishments which are grounded in the values and rules of patriarchal society. Pupils are schooled to conform, and to do as they are told. A harsh school regime intimidates students into doing as they are told instead of thinking for themselves. This is schooling for subordination and oppression - the very opposite of education - which is why it is here referred to as schooling. Girls are taught to accept patriarchal authority, and to accept their subordinate and inferior status as females, subject to the authority and whims of men. They are taught that men have a future in the public realm, but that women belong in the domestic realm of providing domestic care for husbands and children.

Girls are schooled to accept the 'naturalness' of male domination. They are made to accept success on male terms. The few women who reach the top are socialized to behave as 'honorary males'. Top women professionals are accepted on sufferance within the male system, and have been schooled to believe that women already have equality. They believe that women already have equality because they themselves have reached the top! They will even boldly ask you 'I got to the top, so what's wrong with you others?'

Here we see that schooling allows the promotion of only very few women within the existing patriarchal system. Schooling provides benefits for these few women, at the expense of their sisters that are left behind. The honorary male contributes to the continuation of the system that subordinates her sisters. In other words, it is schooling for self-reliance, not education for empowerment. The honorary male cannot be

part of the women's struggle. She is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

In Africa, education to accept your place within the present structure of gender inequality is automatically education for disempowerment. A woman who believes she can make the 'best of herself' within a system of gender discrimination is deluding herself, and is a sell-out to her sisters. In Africa, education for self-reliance is education for disempowerment.

The **First Voice** says that increased schooling can lead to women's empowerment. If schooling is not 'gender sensitive', then we can reform it so that it serves its rightful purpose. But the **Second Voice** says that we have to understand the role of schools in the inter-generational reproduction of patriarchy.

To challenge the role of schools is to challenge an institution which is fundamental to the continuation of patriarchy. Any attempt to divert the school from its present fundamental role will automatically attract the firm and immediate opposition of the patriarchal establishment. Such an attack on the school system can only be launched from a position of political power. In other words, reform of the school system pre-supposes empowerment, and therefore cannot be the means to empowerment.

4. SELF-RELIANCE AS THE OPPOSITE OF EMPOWERMENT

The discourse on empowerment is between **Two Voices** with different vocabularies. The **First Voice** speaks of empowerment as realising opportunities for increased self-reliance and status within the present social system. The **Second Voice** speaks of the impossibility of progress within the present social system, and empowerment as the means by which society must changed.

Gaining increased political control, as a means for dismantling gender apartheid, is the larger meaning of empowerment. Here the term 'self-reliance' is the lesser conception, which does not deserve the name. We may contrast the lesser conception of 'self-reliance' with the larger conception of 'empowerment':

SELF-RELIANCE	EMPOWERMENT
Individual work for self-advancement	Collective work for women's advancement
Work individually, to compete against others	Work as a team with others for common interests
Work within existing system	Reject gender discrimination
Assume gender equality of opportunity	Recognise and analyse the obstacles to progress arising from systemic gender discrimination
Assume that women and men have the same common economic interests	Expose patriarchal political interests within economic interests
Anticipate gender consensus	Anticipate patriarchal resistance
Seek approval from the male establishment	Devise strategies to counter patriarchal resistance
Seek increased access to resources within existing system of control	Demand increased control over allocation of resources
Accept decisions of existing authorities	Demand increased representation in decision making bodies
Accept discrimination as the ignorance of others which has to be endured	Expose, analyse and criticise discriminatory practices
Maximise skills for making the most within the present system	Mobilise for collective action to end discriminatory practices
Avoid all political involvement, and treat self-advancement as a purely economic enterprise	Demand political representation to pursue economic interests

5. TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women's empowerment entails throwing off the habits of female subordination, and patriarchal messages which were unconsciously internalised during the false education called schooling.

Instead of accepting the social world as given, empowerment entails identifying gender inequalities and discrimination which were previously accepted as 'natural' or 'normal', and learning how to take action to end gender discrimination. Gender discrimination needs to be seen as unjust and morally unacceptable. Being empowered entails becoming part of a

programme of collective action to end these discriminatory practices.

Empowerment entails putting on new 'gender spectacles' to see the world very differently, and to question what was previously found acceptable. A primary purpose of such education is to make people dissatisfied with their present world. Perhaps this is the most basic aspect of all education for empowerment: people cannot change an unjust world until they first become profoundly dissatisfied with it. Education for women's self-reliance is about just the opposite, in every important particular, to education for women's empowerment.

With our new 'spectacles' we begin to see a different world. Patriarchy comes into focus! We begin to see all the things that the school concealed. To do this, we have to throw off most of the ideological and theoretical baggage that we increasingly had to drag through our years in school, and through life afterwards. Throwing away our patriarchal school bags is essential for our liberation!

It is for this reason that women with less schooling are more open to education for empowerment. Women with less schooling are likely to have a clearer perception of the injustice of the gender division of labour. The nearer they are to the poverty line, the less they can protect themselves by exploiting the labour of women even poorer than themselves. Being unschooled, they cannot rise by becoming honorary males. Therefore the injustice of gender inequality stares them in the face, and affects them directly.

By contrast, women with more schooling are more indoctrinated into the school system. They have been schooled to believe in the value of schooling. They have been schooled to progress within the existing system, and not to change it. They have been schooled to believe that women get ahead by being schooled, and that women are less advanced than men because of lack of schooling. Women's empowerment involves, as a pre-requisite, that women throw away this false ideological baggage, and join the sisterhood.

With education for empowerment, we may even be able to turn the honorary males into feminists! This transformation would be key to the subversion of patriarchal bureaucracy!

POSTSCRIPT

> "An important aspect of women's education is what has been called feminist consciousness raising, to make them aware of the forms of oppression which they suffer, to make them aware of their rights, and to help them develop ways of shaping their own lives. Many of these initiatives are combined with the teaching of literacy and practical skills. In the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh groups of women are learning to read and also being trained as water pump mechanics. In China, comparable schemes linking literacy with skills ranging from tree-grafting to pig raising, are reaching out to millions."

(Excerpt taken from a section entitled Promoting the Empowerment of Women Through Adult Learning, in the advance information about the ten themes to be discussed at CONFINTEA V).

In the above excerpt, we seem to hear the **Second Voice** speaking of 'feminist consciousness' and 'forms of oppression'. But then we wonder how the excerpt concludes with the message that overcoming oppression can be 'combined with' skills training for tree-grafting and pig-raising!

We are left wondering how this pig-training is connected with overcoming oppression. Are women oppressed by patriarchal government, or by trees and pigs?

The above text is better interpreted as an attempt by the **First Voice** to adopt the more radical vocabulary of the **Second Voice**. Notice that the educational purpose is to 'make them aware of the various forms of oppression', and to 'make them aware of their rights'.

In this, I think we hear the authentic tone of the **First Voice**, of 'teacher knows best'! Empowerment is not 'being made aware' by somebody else. Empowerment is 'making ourselves aware'.

Empowerment is a collective exercise in conscientization, not an exercise in receiving knowledge from the teacher. Empowerment is from within. Empowerment is a bottom-up process, not top-down.

Empowerment is not given, it is taken! Above all, empowerment is not receiving instructions on how to look after the pigs! Beware of being made aware! Instead, let us make ourselves aware

LEARNING LITERACY STRATEGIES FROM INDIAN WOMEN

Malini Ghose

My presentation focuses on examples of our education work with women. I will be talking about our project in the Banda district in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, which is a collaborative venture of NIRANTAR (a resource group working on women's issues) and Mahila Samakhya, a women's empowerment programme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education). These two institutions have been collaborating for the last six years so I would like to share the specific strategies that we have used.

But first, a brief profile of the Banda district, which is one of the most underdeveloped districts in India. A subsistence agricultural area, it is characterized by a skewed landownership pattern and a high level of tribal population. Furthermore the rate of violence against women, including both domestic violence and other forms of sexual violence, is a major problem. Gender disparities between male and female literacy rates are quite high. According to the statistics, female literacy rate is very low and in many villages not even a single literate woman can be found. Therefore, starting an educational programme takes on a different meaning.

Women are faced with a complex web of problems starting from collection of firewood and water, wages and a whole range of other issues related to their everyday work. Trapped in traditional roles within the domestic sphere, their productive work remains unrecognized. They are denied access to information and are largely out of the decision-making process, whether it be in the local government bodies or at any other level. All of this leads to a situation in which women are consistently robbed of their confidence and thus have a very low self-image. So in a sense women are caught in this vicious circle of believing that education is not important for them and will not really change their lives. In this context we have found that it does not help to say, "Okay, let us provide literacy and your life is going to change; you are going to acquire this kind of power." And therefore, this is not how we begin the programme.

Instead, our programme is implemented through organizing women at the village level. We affirm women's knowledge and skills that exist in society by initiating a process of questioning, criticizing, and analysing their life situation - whether it is in terms of the survival task they have to deal with or in terms of discrimination within the family. This discrimination might refer to violence or to domestic roles. And through this process, collectives at the village level are formed and women gradually begin to take on a new roles in their community, either as part of the local body for self-governance, at the village level in India, or as mechanics. This has led to increased confidence, mobility and the breaking of stereotypes in women.

Most of the women's actions also entailed

dealing with structures of power, whether it be lobbying government to ask for change or demanding water or asking for information to change the situation in this regard. These, in fact, created a demand for reading and writing skills as well as other skills. So the provision of literacy came actually after all the background work had been done. There was a demand for education beyond basic literacy which came from village level activists, from mechanics who were trained in specific skills, and from women and girls who attended the centres and the "women active" in the village level collectives that were set up.

I would now like to share the three strategies that we have used in response to the above situation: (a) residential literacy camps; (b) material production; and (c) a residential condensed course, to which women come and stay and learn for six months.

In the ***literacy camps,*** one could find women who have left their homes for ten days with one month gap in between the cycles. This strategy was developed after talking to women who said that they needed to be away from their families in order to make that critical leap into literacy. Apart from the women's absence from their homes, it has proven to be an effective strategy as it is a highly intensive course. Teacher-student ratio is very high. The atmosphere for learning is supportive as there is a lot of group learning going on. Since the texts used are usually generated at the workshops, words and contents have a direct meaning to the women. We can thus challenge and negotiate some of the structures of power by analysing the educational setting and by developing new techniques.

In the ***material production,*** a mixed group of newly literate women came together to bring out a broad sheet newsletter. The women attended workshops where they were trained to write, to layout and to go through the entire production process. Again this had a number of empowering aspects. It did, of course, strengthen literacy skills, but more than that, it helped to break gender stereotypes at various levels. Writing, communicating and printing was not seen as women's work or as things women could do. When this project was initiated, there was in fact a lot of response and resistance from the community which had to be negotiated. Another positive aspect of this newsletter was that it allowed women to control the content of the material they were going to bring out. Very rarely do women find a voice in other educational materials, but this time they were actually taking control of what they wanted to read and how they wanted to see themselves. So new images of women, which were beyond the reproductive role, were developed. And last but not least, the language of the newsletter was important. It was not in standard Hindi, but in Bundel, the language of communication of the women. The use of the local language, a language which local women understand, was a significant shift. The newsletter also played an important watch dog role for the community because the women were reporting various incidents of violence and other events things that do not find their way into standard newspapers. This created an environment where women could begin to talk about these things both at societal and at community level.

The demand for an ***educational centre*** came from the women who wanted to move beyond basic literacy. In a long process of

dialogue, the women said that they wanted to get away from their homes and even study for a period of six months, which is unheard of. The programme therefore also helped the women to get away, to leave their children, and to negotiate with their husbands in order to come and learn. So this educational programme then moved away from looking at education in merely functional terms and saw it in a broader scope of broadening horizons of women. After this demand was created, one of the main issues that we were confronted with was what we were going to do. The women were ready to come, but there was nothing really available that could bring in a gender perspective into an educational curriculum. A lot of the materials had to do with children and there was nothing that looked specifically at women's education. So once again, we laid down certain principles on evolving and designing this curriculum through an inductive process. The underlying principle was that the "gender class", and in our context "gender caste" should determine both methodology and content of the course that was going to be developed. Methodology should recognize women's location within the social structure, that is: Where do women fit into this web of interlocking social systems of gender, caste and society? The social system definitely determines women's relationship to information and other structures afar. Therefore the methodology should also validate experiential knowledge which implies that women should have a role in determining the pace and content of the learning. Moreover women have to be convinced that they can learn since many women believe that they are going to fail and that they are not going to be able to learn. So these two aspects, methodology and content, are very important.

The curriculum finally evolved around five critical areas: land, water, forests, society and health. We were very clear that we did not want gender to be a separate kind of a module, but that each one of these information areas should be regarded from a gender perspective. All too often gender gets added as an adornment and we did not want that. People come and put gender in as a topic after the agenda has been designed and that is not the way to go about it. New information was gathered from women's experiences and this was integrated into the curriculum and the five topics it contained. This was another important area as we wanted to bring women's knowledge in without replacing their existing knowledge with the new mainstream information they also desire and want access to. The other dimension was to redress the invisibility of women within these mainstream knowledge systems. Even when we are looking at the material and at the evolution of history, hundreds of images of man appear: man, the discoverer and so on - and no images of women. They are not there and we do not know what they do. We therefore asked ourselves: How can we build this body of knowledge which basically reflects women as very critical to social development?

In the three strategies that I have mentioned two areas need to be emphasized, training and partnership. In most programmes teachers are trained on pedagogy and how you can teach better, but they are rarely given any kind of training in terms of gender. And yet, if we expect and want them to do all these things, then our training must also reflect the gender perspective. Partnerships are very important, because, as I mentioned earlier, our work has been sustained through working together. Partnerships with the

government department, where women's groups have been very important, have been crucial right from the beginning for planning and conceptualizing the project and they continue to play a decisive role in the actual implementation.

In ending, I would like to briefly mention how we try to bring empowerment into literacy and the education process by highlighting a few issues. The first one is that literacy is not an autonomous skill that you can provide through these specifically designed literacy programmes. Instead, they have to be located in social practices and the lived realities of women. Thus we really must begin and continue to work within that framework. Secondly, it is important to involve women in determining their needs, in choosing the issues they want to learn, and how they want to develop their strategies at various levels. We believe that it is not right to sit in Delhi and say: "You know, this is what we are going to do". The third critical aspect concerns content and process. Both are very critical to an empowering process; you cannot have empowering outcomes if your methodology is against empowerment. Therefore, we really need to look at both at the same time where they need to be examined, from a gender and caste perspective, right from the beginning.

The education that we provide needs to enable women to transform, negotiate and challenge. I have used these three adjectives simply because even though transformation does not always happen, the education that we provide should certainly challenge and enable women to negotiate. The structures of power, both at the individual and community level, have to be changed in whatever small way possible. Out of this process of transformation or negotiation emerges the creation of spaces for women which is also very important. These spaces can be structures or institutions that women are in control of at decision-making levels or have creative visions for; they could also be informal communities of women learners who need to interact. They are important for a sustained educational process.

INCORPORATING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN LITERACY WORK

Jennifer Horsman

I would like to talk about a research project in which I have been involved in collaboration with the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), a nation-wide NGO . While this research was done in Canada I hope that it will raise questions for other contexts as well.

When I first started talking about literacy work with survivors of trauma, the immediate reaction was: "That has nothing to do with us". Often literacy workers said: "But I am not a therapist. I just do literacy. I am focussing on reading and writing; that is outside". But what I want to talk about today - and this is really confirmed - is that I think it is absolutely crucial to look at the contexts and living conditions of learners.

Looking at the impacts of trauma on literacy learning may influence us to do literacy differently. It may be useful in picking up some of the best examples that demonstrate the effects of violence on our learning in the classroom.

If we do not take this into consideration, we really risk letting learners fail. We risk having learners who get the sensation that what is supposed to be an opportunity or in my context a second opportunity for them, in reality confirms their own belief that they cannot learn, that they are stupid, that they are worthless or all these other dreadful things that people have mentioned. I want to just give an example: A learner who comes into the classroom one day, then leaves again and comes back a few weeks later. Or someone is there, but always staring out of the window. One common reaction as a literacy teacher or facilitator would be to say: "They cannot really be serious. They are not motivated." Another reaction is to judge ourselves instead and say: "I am not making it interesting enough. I have to make it more interesting, and then they will stay." What I want to suggest is that perhaps we can have alternative frameworks for what is going on, which might make it possible for somebody to stay and learn.

I have also learned this in my previous research where I looked at women's literacy practices in their lives. Over and over again I heard about the violence in their lives, but ten years ago I thought that violence was really irrelevant to what I was doing and so I tried to get people back on track, I am ashamed to admit. Over the years I realized how much I was hearing about violence in the literacy practice and so felt that it was really important to push those questions further.

For this present study, I have interviewed groups of literacy learners, literacy workers, individual therapists and counsellors all over Canada. This means that I have talked to a wide variety of people of different ethnicities, different backgrounds, in different sorts of settings around the country. I asked them what they were seeing in their education, either in their learning or in their teaching, are the impacts of abuse. I inquired about what kind of programmes should be done differently or what they thought was already wonderful. I also asked therapists and counsellors what they thought a literacy worker should remember if they realized that many of their learners included survivors of some sort of trauma. I then took some of the discourse from the therapist back to literacy workers, so that the information could go back and forth.

Then I asked the literacy workers: "If you know how a therapist describes it, would you see anything different in the classroom than what you are already seeing?" Neither am I trying to suggest that the literacy discourse is the wrong one and the therapist is discourse is the right one - I want to look at both, and look at how complex and different they are. I am not trying to suggest either that we need to diagnose who has been traumatized, and then treat them differently in the literacy process.

What I am suggesting is that we need to create new discourses and that everybody conceiving of literacy work from the donors, the administrators to policy-makers need to recognize that literacy work must be carried out in ways which respond to the needs of survivors of trauma. Some will be present in every group, whatever statistics we take. It is hard to imagine that a group would not include some women who have dealt with violence, just as I am sure there are some of us here, who have experienced violence of some sort.

Up to now I have just been saying "violence trauma" without talking about what I mean. Therefore, I want to speak very broadly about the different sorts of violence that women experience. When I use the word "trauma", I am taking a more therapeutic term, a definition the therapists have given to me. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke a response of catastrophe. Many also argue that once people have experienced some trauma, then all violence they experience continues to be very traumatic, very major. Interesting though, the therapeutic discourse has often described that reaction to further trauma as overreaction. And I want to argue with that because it suggests that somehow the position of not having experienced trauma is the position of the real truth while having experienced it is somehow wrong; that judgement is not real, and the other is the correct one. So, from which location is the truth then?

I want to illustrate that by just giving an example of the use of canaries in the mines. I have always heard that miners used to take a bird, a canary, down into the mine with them. The reason was that if there was toxic gas in the mine, the bird would keel over and die before the people, and so they could leave in time. Nobody was suggesting that the birds

were overreacting or that it was a problem that it was only a minor amount of gas. It was seen as a sensitivity that was really valuable, because it indicated that there was a dangerous level of toxic gas there.

This led me to think that perhaps we could evaluate reactions to violence of women who have already experienced violence a bit like that, as a sensitivity, and not as a problem. They might be an indicator that there are levels of violence that are toxic to others as well. And we should be noticing it. But perhaps the canary ideology is too apt, because canaries were seen as expendable. It did not matter if they died, as it would save the valuable men in the mines. I begin to wonder as I do this work, if society is suggesting that women and children who have experienced trauma already are expendable, too. And I think that is a real danger.

So I want to move from the therapeutic discourse to the experiences of workers across Canada. An enormous number of them were really eager to talk about their frustrations, their tensions, their sense that they did not know how to address the issues of violence that they were facing as they heard women's stories in their classrooms. Nevertheless, they were neither talking about it in their programmes nor in their colleges.

So what I want to suggest is that we really need to be aware of the impacts of violence on learning when we are doing literacy. It does not have to be something that we just shunt aside and say: "It does not apply in literacy. Go somewhere else and sort out your problems before you can come and learn!" In some settings there may be also other places of counselling available, but the issue will still be there in the literacy classroom.

I want to just give you the example of one learner a literacy worker wrote a note to me about. The learner who had just come in to have a basic mathematics class said that she very much sorted out her childhood and all the abuse that had happened in it. She had actually been working on it for a long time but math had brought it back so that she decided to keep a journal. Her struggle was really extreme and that made the literacy worker worry. Then the learner did not show up for a test and said afterwards she did not quite know what had happened. So then there was a make-up test and she almost missed that, too. She was late getting to the class and when she arrived, she could not feel her lower extremities at all. A couple of times during the test she was having trouble breathing, so people let her talk about it, gave her help with the questions to make it more like a class and not a test, etc. but she was determined to go on with it.

This is really an example of how important this topic is. If that instructor had not been aware that her behaviour was due to the violence in her life, it might have never been spoken about and that learner would have just not shown up to a test. As she would not have been able to cope, she would have quit the class instead of writing a journal and focusing on it. So I think it is that focus that is really important.

I said earlier that the trauma was about losing control, losing connection, and losing meaning, and those are all really crucial things in literacy. We ask learners to take control, to think about where they are going, to set their goals and to decide what they

want to learn. We ask them to define meaning in print.

But if those are complicated terrains, complicated areas of work and if we are not realizing that the issues of violence are going to surface in that way, then it is all going to be much more complex, tense and fraught than what we might expect. I think there is going to be a whole set of things going on learners are struggling with.

We may think that when a learner is looking out of the window that he or she is not motivated and that he or she is not paying attention. Perhaps we might just say that they are dreaming and that we are not making it interesting enough. Perhaps a therapist would say they are dissociating, but I do not think we should diagnose and try and figure out what is wrong.

What I do think, though, is that we need to bring those issues to workers' minds. I am talking of how present somebody is, what blocks one's presence, and what enables one's presence. Furthermore, we have to think about the atmosphere we need in the classroom to help people feel really safe. What shifts do we need to make so that memories of violence are not triggered and people feel comfortable to be able to get up and walk around if they need to. Whatever it may be, if we bring it into the discourse of the class and make it a part of what we are actually talking about, perhaps many learners learn to stay present and to pay continued attention in that way. Then, instead of being a barrier which makes everybody feel frustrated, it becomes part of the learning.

There are many other issues like that. People are often in crisis; they are struggling whether to trust and they are struggling around their own boundaries. They are struggling about what stories they can tell and whether somebody will judge them or blame them if they tell about their experiences of violence. Learners are struggling with all those questions, perhaps they are even struggling with not feeling safe in the classroom. Then, how much energy have they got left for literacy learning? And if they have to hide all of that - because to admit it would mean to be to be sick, to be abnormal, to be somebody who is outside, because they have dealt with trauma - then what energy is left?

So I think we need discourses in literacy which allow for a normalcy and for a recognition. That is a lot of what will be going on in the classroom for many learners. Perhaps in some situations even most learners. When I talked to literacy workers in my situation, I found that many of them discovered that every learner in their class had experienced a pretty major trauma. This is of course heavy stuff to work with and it leads to things people were talking about earlier: the importance of training and the proportion of support for workers. Hearing stories of incredible traumatic events in learners' lives,

what can we do with those stories, where can we get support, where is the administrative support, where is all of the programme support that is necessary?

Lastly, I think that it is really important to recognize that is not just a head, a severed head on its own, who comes to a literacy programme or perhaps to other levels of education, but that it is a whole person. It is a person not only with a mind, which has learnt from every piece of violence in her life that she does not work well and that she is of no use, but also a person with a body and this body is perhaps learning: "Can I take up space?". It is also a person with a spirit that has been crushed in many ways to make them feel that they are outside humanity, and that they are worthless. And it is a person with emotions that are going to flare and blow up and have to be dealt with within the classroom.

So perhaps in the literacy programmes we need to recognize that whole person, all of those aspects, and we have to recognize the damages and the ways we have to work with that. We also have to work with some of the insights, some of the awareness, and some of the varieties of knowledge that come from having experienced trauma. And then we have to look very creatively at how all of those aspects of a person can be included in learning. So, I just want to argue that we have to explore new discourses for literacy work which include and make visible and speakable the really broad range of trauma that people experience in different settings - from the very personal and private to the more broader, the politically based. All of the different sorts of trauma in different situations need to be addressed.

I have been horrified over the last days here, that in the formal talk I heard nothing about the violence that so many women experience. This led me to think that there is an incredible need for pressure to fund us. We have to recognize that literacy programmes for

women take longer time because it is not just a little simple process, but because there are also some complicated processes happening. Policy-makers, administrators, and also literacy workers need to understand all of the complexity of what is going on in a classroom, when somebody who has experienced trauma is putting herself out there to learn. And as it is not a hidden private process anymore, the concept of what is actually happening in literacy programmes can be broadened. I think we need to reach a state in which it is impossible to talk about literacy without also recognizing that many (perhaps mainly female) learners are survivors of violence. That has to be taken into account in every aspect of a programme.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN THE CARRIBEAN: ISSUES AND POSSIBILITIES

Anne Marie Smith

My presentation deals with women's education in the Caribbean, its current issues and possibilities. It will not look much at the theory, since much of the theory in which this paper is based has been discussed by Sara Longwe. In the Caribbean, we, too have two voices. These are the content in these courses. As the paper evolves, you can decide for yourselves, which of these two voices is speaking. I will look at issues of equality, of equity and of the dynamics which produces a particular situation of access and equity, and then end with possibilities.

Education has long been one of the most important determinants of our chances in life. It is regarded as a key to equal opportunities and the ladder to advancement. Mankind learned very early that literacy and communication in the hands of a few meant for them power, the authority to govern and control of others, so that this pivotal element in human development was then endorsed as a basic human right by the governments participating in the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Participants of the conference recognized that without education and especially without equal education experiences, skills and qualifications, both men and women, are denied the opportunity to develop critical skills, such as the capacity for rational judgement and basic survival.

Since the 1970s, the trend for women was to take greater advantage of education. As a result, they have taken quantum leaps in terms of access to formal education and at

the level of educational achievements. However, women's gains in the education system have not necessarily led to gains in the employment sector or to societal gains. Thus, the presence of gender stratification in education to the disadvantage of women in the Caribbean is very hard to detect. Important questions as to its causes and its development remain unanswered to a large extent. And the few answers given are divergent as they in themselves raise further questions. In the Caribbean today, the traditional stereotype of a female under-achiever is lively and founded. In fact; in the Caribbean region, and particularly in Jamaica, there is considerable deviation from global trends in terms of the extent to which females are before males in a number of educational performance indicators.

Even though our theme is that of adult education, I would also like to refer to the secondary level as the earlier stages of education (e.g. secondary stage) determine the process at the adult level. There seems to exist equal education opportunities for males and females in terms of access to pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. There are obviously trends in favour of the enrolment of females at the primary level on the Bahamas and at the secondary level in St. Lucia. Generally, girls attend pre-tertiary level school more consistently than boys;

they perform better and show a higher level of registration than boys. At the tertiary level, the gap widens even further, again in favour of females. The difference is particularly evident in Jamaica, the Bahamas, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Caribbean examinations council exam indicates that a total of 190,000 females, as opposed to 120,000 males, sat the examinations for the certification most sought after by school leavers at the secondary level. 70,000 more females than males! Reports on the 1995 graduation figures for the (Mono) campus of the University of the West Indies, situated in Jamaica, show that 70% of all graduates at the undergraduate level were females. Faculties such as the education faculty record even higher disparities. The regional statistics combined showed 61.3% females as opposed to 38.75% males graduating. At the graduate level, 54.9% of total enrolment are females, 6.1% males. Data from the University of Technology, a regional institution in Jamaica, show that 51.4% of all students are females. This disparity in favour of females in the system of Caribbean territories is further manifested in a higher level of illiteracy being reported for men than women in some territories (Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia and St. Vincent).

The common entrance examination is used by a number of territories to determine secondary school placement. In Jamaica the pass mark is significantly lower for males than it is for females. This is rationalized on the claim that girls or women mature faster than males. Nevertheless, in 1996, 44% of all the places went to boys and 56% went to girls. However, the institutionalization of equal access within the education system or even an equal access in favour of females does not automatically ensure equal outcomes, especially if para-socialization ensures that the sexes have different initial competence or interests in a given subject.

Going to another area, the Human Employment and Resources Trust (HERT), the premier institution of vocational training in Jamaica, was established to alleviate the high unemployment levels among young persons, and particularly among females. The HERT act offers a 80% rebate on income tax to those entities or individuals who agree to take female trainees, compared with a 75% rebate for to those who take male trainees. Over the academic years 1992 to 1995, enrolment in HERT trust programmes comprised of 61.4% females and an average of 38.6% males. These data have been seen as an indication that the quality of educational opportunities for women is not an issue in the Caribbean. It is further added that women are in fact the privileged group. Their success in education has received much publicity and commentary in the local media and research community. It has even been a cause of concern for some groups, who believe that this success has come at the expense of male educational performance. They have been the cause for new policy interventions to improve the performance of males in education.

It seems that Caribbean women to a large extent have made great quantities of leaps. Nevertheless, there is need for concern regarding the quality of education that they receive. They have still to overcome hurdles getting themselves into the system. And what do they really get when they go there? Issues or questions that are therefore pertinent in any examination of gender are:

- ✗ Do women have the same opportunities as men to study the same fields and subjects?
- ✗ Do they have access to all areas of professional development?
- ✗ What is the nature of the curriculum, covert and overt, which they encounter in the system.
- ✗ What is the nature of the pedagogical practices to which they are exposed?
- ✗ What kind of choices do they have, once they have acquired this education?

Not only do these issues determine the achievements in the educational process itself, but they also determine the respective functions and roles of men and women both at home and in the labour market.

A persistent problem in Caribbean education is the partition or segregation of the curriculum along fairly strict and traditionally accepted gender boundaries. Women are still concentrated on so-called soft subjects, which really qualifies them for low paying, low status jobs. For example, even though 57% of all HERT graduate students in 1996 were females, 85% of these females could be found in the areas of commerce, sewing, and hospital management. Apart from being the traditional areas associated with ascribed feminine skills, the local unemployment statistics indicate that it is people with these skills who already form the bulk of the unemployed labour force. So many of these women are really being trained to be unemployed.

Patterns of participation in the secondary-level education system predispose men and women to pursue different fields of study and different careers. A 1995 UNESCO education report notes that in the Caribbean, females generally account for higher percentages of enrolment in areas of study and training orientated towards commerce and service trades than in courses orientated towards craft, industrial and engineering trades or occupations. In the 1996 Caribbean examinations council data, these typical patterns were observed. In the academic track, physics is a male bastion, while the preferred science option of girls is biology or integrated science. The humanities, arts and languages are also female dominated in order to meet the expected stereotype. In the vocational track, there is a rigid line of demarcation with the typical female choices being domestic and business subjects, while the male choices include the range of technical subjects. The HERT trust programme is no different: The highest proportion of females to males in any single programme could be found in academies' programmes, which are clerical and secretarial programmes. Over a three year review period, the average enrolment of females in these programmes is 71%. This amounted to a ratio of females to males of approximately 2.4 to 1.

However, enrolment in the Jamaican-German automotive school and apprenticeship programme, which is a technical programme, and in a vocational training and development institute, which again is a very technical programme, favoured males in the ratios of 14.6 to 1, 39 to 1 and 4 to 1, respectively. The majority of female graduates from the University of the West Indies are clustered in arts, general studies, and social studies, while the majority of men engage in engineering, social sciences and natural sciences. The importance of science and technology as a vehicle for advancement and development and as a means to remain competitive in the world market is widely acknowledged in the Caribbean.

A number of researchers on gender and the curriculum therefore converge on the areas of science and technology. The researchers unanimously conclude that males dominate in the "hard" sciences (physics, chemistry and zoology) while women are in the "soft" sciences. What has not been addressed by the researchers reviewed is whether the observed patterns of sex segregation of the curriculum reflect constrained or unconstrained choices. If unconstrained, then these patterns do not necessarily represent deliberate acts of discrimination. If, on the other hand, choices are governed by factors such as time tabling practices, groupings for examination purposes or parental or teacher influences, then the system is operating in a discriminatory manner and in the opinion of many women are disadvantaged in the long term.

What explains this unique gender education situation in the Caribbean, that particularly at the tertiary level more women are enrolled than men? One of the main issues is that of socializing messages that both sexes receive. The practical achievement and performance rates of Caribbean and Jamaican females have been attributed to two major factors. One is the nature of the socialization to which they have been exposed. And the other is a theory that in the Caribbean and in Jamaica in particular the education of women tends to result in higher returns than similar investments in the education of males. The process of socialization within a family results in what some refer to as a "habitus"; that is the type of world view that the individual assimilates at home. If this world view is in tune with the "habitus" of the school, then the individual is more likely to succeed in education. It is claimed that the "habitus" that Caribbean females form at home better prepares them for the structure of the educational system.

Caribbean women are socialized not to be passive and dependent, but to be independent and to be prepared for shouldering the family and other responsibilities independent of male support. They learn the importance of independence and responsibility. Caribbean males on the other hand are socialized to have few responsibilities and to do things that are of interest to them and to please themselves. As a result of this socialization, males approach the education system with a weaker sense of process. Additionally, women need to be more qualified to receive less rewards for the same job than men. Consequently, a woman who desires to compete in the job market is forced to develop a strong motivation to educate herself to the very highest levels of a system. The message however is conflicting. One side says: "Achieve, push yourself!". But at the same time: "Go so far and go no further!"

Additionally, in the Caribbean educational system, and in adult education in particular, many students are men and women with many years of work experience whose jobs are threatened by young graduates, equipped with new and needed skills, ready to replace them. For women, this problem is even more serious. A woman with a certificate in management for example, who has received no on-the-job training for 20 years of working is forced out by a young man and sometimes also by a young woman with a bachelor's degree in management studies and expertise in computers. These women's hands are tied, as they have to go out and reeducate themselves. Quite often, and this is a major disadvantage compared to men, they have family responsibilities; responsibilities for a husband, for children, and for their parents. And this prevents them from accessing education as they should. If they actually enrol, they sometimes miss out on their classes and have less time to dedicate on the educational pursuit.

The data presented in this paper points to the fact that although quantitatively women have an advantage over men in the education systems in the Caribbean, girls are at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts when it comes to patterns of participation (=qualitatively). The UNESCO report on education in the Caribbean states that despite the advances made by women in education and in attaining economic independence, they still have less access to opportunities and rewards and to the corridors and boardrooms of political and economic power compared to men. Education opportunities and economic independence have therefore not been translated into personal, social or political power for Caribbean women.

This data was supplied in the report on the status of Caribbean women prepared by the Caribbean community for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Data in the report indicate income disparities between males and females - even while demonstrating the clear trend that the female population is better educated. They also demonstrate the under-representation of women in parliament, in local government, and in the judiciary.

Even though more women are moving into management positions, high unemployment rates are reported for females in many territories. Women in the Caribbean territories also have less access to productive resources, such as land and public loans than men do. The employed male labour force is increasing relative to the female labour force, while the educated female labour force is increasing relative to male's.

Creating a new social order in the Caribbean and an environment in which the ideal of gender equity can be realized is therefore a multifaceted problem. Education is a basic human right, but obviously all the factors seem to have more powerful determinants of success in the Caribbean society.

Simply adjusting a supposed male under-achievement is therefore not the way forward... In spite of women's over achievement, men continue to hold subordinate positions in many spheres of Caribbean life and are over-represented in leadership and at levels where decisions are taken and policies are determined. In other words, whereas a practical need of Caribbean women for greater access to education opportunities has been addressed over the last three to four decades, their

strategic need for greater empowerment has not been facilitated or met. What needs to be addressed, however, in the educational arena is a breaking down of the curtain which determines patterns of curriculum participation for both sexes.

A level playing field has to be created which allows both, males and females, open access to the range of curriculum options and therefore the freedom to choose career paths and professions based on inclination and aptitude.

The right to exercise this choice is as important, or even more important than access to a place at school. Of even greater urgency, though, is the need to institute a system of reward, which is based on educational efforts rather than on the male ascription in all Caribbean territories.

DISCUSSION OF WORKSHOP I

On Culture

Q:I am from Botswana in Africa and I have enjoyed what you have said, but I have a problem. Normally, the minute you start talking about issues of gender, especially when you talk about issues of gender as far as women in the literacy programme are concerned, you find that women in the literacy programme are poor; they are overburdened with work, because some of them are heads of households. Then, when you begin to talk about these women and about the fact that their rights have been trampled on, people, and especially men, immediately draw the conclusion that certain things cannot be done, because they are not in our culture. I find this very disturbing.

We believe that culture is not static and that it can be changed. Therefore, we have to address the question of culture, because in most cases issues of gender are pushed aside because people say: "It cannot be done in our culture; here you cannot have men equal with women". And if you are dealing with illiterate people, opinions like those seem to matter to them. So I would like to find a way to address these cultural issues in literacy classes without offending people who give a lot of importance to culture.

Sara Longwe (SL): I am glad for this question because it also raises some other things I was thinking about. One of them is how to initiate these discourses you were talking about. We know that if we keep talking about patriarchy, women are not going to be very interested in talking about their own background and in coming to these classes, because they have a lot of

immediate needs that have to be addressed. We see time and again that if you are talking about certain skills, a certain education or a certain confidence building, it takes women up to a point.

Nevertheless, if one does not begin to address the whole question of gender and the whole question of power, there is a kind of a platform. I do not know whether one can call it a glass ceiling, but at every level there is something that stops. And again and again we find that most programmes tend to stagnate at a particular level, because we are not able to jump beyond a certain stage.

The second thing which really bothers me is that violence is part of our cultural practice. We are living totally embedded in violence. I remember that once during a the workshop with rural women, we were talking about literacy and the experiences of the fairly common child marriage. When we did role plays, every single role play depicted marriage as rape, and as extremely violent rape. When you talk to the women, they never talk about violence or rape, but it comes around in these indirect ways.

Many of us have problems in articulating the issue of violence within certain cultural spaces and it is very difficult for the women to talk about violence. Of course, certain kinds of violence can be articulated and they can be talked about, but a lot of violence

cannot be talked about, because it is so embedded in one's life. At the same time we know that you cannot proceed unless you begin to address these issues. These are the topics we have never been able to really resolve for ourselves.

On Empowerment and confronting patriarchy

Malini Ghose (MG): Education for adult women should have an element of re-examining the so-called normal subordinations of women which we have internalized. For those of us who went to school, the task is not to look back and not to continue with what we had in the schools as here the education to subordination of women was reinforced. Adult education has to take up this aspect of systemic gender discrimination in our own culture and we as adult educators have to create a situation in which these adult women are enabled to look at their own lives.

Empowerment has to give us new gender spectacles, so that we look at the things that we always accepted from a different point of view and start disapproving them. But the problem is quite challenging; it is very sensitive and also very threatening. So that is why it causes a problem at home when men see that women are beginning to question their own lives. Patriarchy is being challenged and once this happens, it results in violence in any form, because that is the only way it can reinforce itself.

So even though the two discourses are conflicting paths, we should not run away. As we are challenging something that has been believed in all along, we know that the conflict has to be raised. And yet, people are saying now: "This is no good!" So the thing is to anticipate a conflict and be prepared for it. Our problem is that we do not anticipate conflicts; instead, we even assume that everybody is going to rush and give their consent. Now that is where we go wrong. There is no such consensus. A consensus would mean that we are getting rid of patriarchy and that those who are in power agree to losing it.

But who is going to lose power easily and give it up? That is why I am saying that empowerment means that you have to take it. We compare this process to our struggle for political independence. Very few countries obtained political independence on the platter, instead they had to fight for it. After having tried to accommodate a lot of things, people realized that accommodation is out. And now women say "we do not want to fight with men", but I always say "yes, we want to fight with men", because that is what it really means. So this is why we have come to a plateau. To think beyond is the challenge.

Comments from a participant from India: There is a lot that one can say about the programme that Malini has talked about. This programme has been in the field for the past eight years in very different regional contexts in India. Our experience has been that in the initial phases when women were coming together or when they were being enabled to come together, the issues that were raised were the issues that were being addressed. Essentially these were the issues of the practical needs of everyday life, and these issues were not very threatening, neither to the women themselves, nor to their families, men or communities. In this initial phase there was very little conflict at the village

level when women were organizing themselves.

It was only when they moved to a slightly different level of consciousness that conflicts arose both within the household and at the community level. Even the act of attending a meeting on a regular basis (e.g. once or twice a month), created a lot of tension within the households. The tension was about the questions: What are the women going to do? What is happening? Who are these women who have come? Are they breaking up families? Are they going to break up marriages? Are they Christians? Are they preaching the Bible? There were lots of different kinds of questions. But when the men recognized that these women's collectives were capable of doing a lot of things at the village level there was a lot of support and encouragement to women to come out.

But the moment questions were directed at issues like child marriage, wife beating after a husband has come home drunk, the initiation of young girls into some ritual practices and more importantly in some rare cases, when women raised questions of equal wages along with men, there was certainly a lot of conflict. In general, our experience has been that collective action is very important. I do not claim that we have successfully dealt with the issues of culture yet, but I certainly think that groups of women have managed to address some of these issues at a smaller level.

On Evaluation

What is still missing is an evaluation of the Mahila Samakhya programme. Mahila Samakhya has demonstrated that we have gone quite far in the area of women's educational empowerment. But, have we really set the stage for challenging and transforming gender relations? It is questionable. That is really the challenge that lies ahead of us, both in terms of the capacities that we need to build among women, in order to mount this kind of challenge, as well as in working with communities. We recognize now that we have to work with communities to enable women to find these kinds of spaces. Culture is a very serious issue, as it is language, and I think the two are inter-linked.

Culture as a concept

Nelly Stromquist (NS): Let me just add a few things on the question of culture. Culture is used as an untouchable concept and as an impermeable entity. We should reduce it to a series of activities that we conduct, unpack the concept and explain the various activities that go on under the name of culture. If we see it as a way of life, then we will see that some activities are good and some activities are undesirable. There are people who profit from it and there are people who do not. If we accept arguments that say that this is not our culture, it can be the same thing as saying it is not our religion. It can become an impregnable concept that you cannot cut through. So we have to unpack that and say what is meant by culture and what the various kinds of activities that we undertake in our everyday life are. Then let us examine them one by one.

Linking women's experiences of violence to literacy programmes

Comments: I am from South Africa and I work in the area of violence against women and we see a lot of women who come

because of their experiences of violence. We often try to link these women to literacy programmes, but unfortunately without a lot of success. Sometimes when they come back, we actually enquire why they are not going and why they are not staying. The sort of feedback that we are getting is in fact always the same: they cannot talk about the issues which are important to them. There is no link between the content or the importance of issues in their lives and the content of a curriculum in literacy. They are, for example, talking about a bird which flew over the nest, and this does not really matter to them. So I think there is a need to link the curriculum to the reality of women's lives, because that would also encourage and of course, indeed add to the kind of things that you were already talking about, that educators have to be much more sensitive. My gut feeling is that this probably also happened. So it seems like it is a combination of aspects, because we really have a hard time getting women to go to these courses.

Jenny Horsman (JH): I find it sad to hear what you say, but I am also not surprised as I think in my own context many people would say the same. Quite often learners feel that there is no place for them in the programmes that they go to and that there are many barriers. Obviously there are some types of programmes where there are 'women' only programmes and where the curriculum is in some context very much around women's lives. I presume that in those programmes there is much more space, where women do begin to find it more possible to speak.

On making curriculum more responsive

Nevertheless, I found it interesting to hear that you are suggesting that it is still so taboo that often the women themselves are not going to name it. So perhaps even in those programmes, there is still a challenge! I absolutely agree with you that probably curriculum is one of the crucial places. In Canada we therefore chose this place as the way to do the work. We really take on looking at issues around women's lives and working. We include in the curriculum material how workers will respond when somebody discloses a story. What will they do and what are the possibilities? How will you prepare ahead of time? So I agree with you in that this aspect is really crucial. But I also think that if the methodology for all the different ways in which people are going to respond to learning are much more normalized, it will feel a slightly more comfortable place to try and learn.

And I think that is the challenge. People should be able to go to a literacy course and say: "Oh yes, this is the place for me and for all of my stories and all of my life!" And I think that in many settings it needs a lot of preparation for literacy workers to have really thought ahead of time about how one can address personal experiences. This means that it is not just diving into: "Tell us your life story" and then be left with no way as to know how to cope with it, either as an instructor or other member in the classroom. So, I think that the implication for us is to think differently about curriculum. If there were more time, I would tell you much more about how I have been pushing this!

On Learning environment

Comments from Participant: When we talk about curriculum, very often we just narrow it down to the actual material or the subjects that we teach, but I think that curriculum is broader than that. It is the actual learning environment that we are providing. We have to ask ourselves what kind of a learning environment it is and whether it is a safe space for women, because lot of the articulation happens outside the classroom and does not form part of the formal teaching. So I think we need to look at the learning environment and not just at what we actually teach as this is very integral to the curriculum.

On the relationship between education and employment

Q: I am concerned about the situation in Trinidad where large numbers of girls and women have managed to get education, but all the same they have not been given their rightful employment in society. What if strategies are worked out in such a way that there are more women taking up courses in other fields, like engineering and so on? Is the situation going to be the same that society will still shun women engineers and women who excel in other fields? If that be the case who makes sure that women who are educated are accepted by society just like our men folk.

Anne-Marie Smith (AS): Research has shown that women in the Caribbean who have been trained in engineering, for example, usually do not get jobs in the field of engineering once they have finished their training. This leads to the situation where many of them are working in other fields. When they do get employed, their employment is at a level that does not take their levels of qualification into account. So even if a woman gets out of this very typical curriculum segregation, and goes to the fields of agriculture or engineering, they are still being discriminated against when it comes to the job market. I am not sure what kind of strategies are going to work, so strategies have to be tried at the macro and micro levels.

We recognize that these kinds of changes will take time, because it took a lot of time for us to get to the stage where more women are being enrolled in institutions than men. And I recognize that it will take time for women's education or their educational achievements to be reflected in the kinds of work that they end up doing. But it still takes much more time than we think it should take. It is still very disproportionate to the time that they take to get themselves qualified.

There are some women's organizations, which have done both research and practical things. There is, for example, CAFRA, a regional research institution. An association of women's organization in Jamaica has also done practical things aimed at involving the both women-members and non-members. One of their policies is, for example, to give preference in terms of employment to those who belong to the organization and who have a firm or own a business - as long as they are qualified for the position available. This affirmative action is argued to discriminate against men and that is the other side of the coin.

On getting women on to decision-making bodies

Female Participant : I would like to add that in my opinion our problem is that as women we tend to accept the existing authorities. What we need to do is not just to educate more women in different fields, but to be represented in the decision-making bodies, because that is were it is decided whether they take men or women. In most cases that is the kind of empowerment that we need: We have got to demand more representation and seek ways to get it. If the authorities continue to be male dominated and our education for adults does not challenge that the decision making instance is the basis where we should get equality.

An example is the UN Human Development Report for 1995. Picking a country like Denmark and comparing it with Malawi, it is obvious that Malawi was far below the Danes concerning the political representation of women in parliament which amounted to 48% in Denmark. But when it came to the representation of women in private organizations, it amounted to 14% in Denmark and 9% in Malawi. Thus, in the sphere of private organizations, the gap has narrowed, which shows that representation in the private sector was far more crucial than representation in the parliament. So power keeps on shifting all the time. In parliament, women do have power but as soon as we get near the private sector, it shifts somewhere else. Therefore, what adult education has to teach us is to see how power is shifting, so that we can keep in line and do not just realize afterwards that it has shifted in the male toilet or in the bar where we cannot go.

Comparing European and African realities

Female Participant: I would like to comment on the paper of Sara Longwe which I think is very good. I really liked that. I am European, so I come from a continent where a lot of the things that you are analysing in your countries have already happened, as the situation in Europe is a bit further developed than the situation in Africa. And yet, I am so impressed that even though according to your analysis the situation in Europe is quantitatively different, it is qualitatively exactly the same as what you are analysing now in Africa. And I would like to point out that in a continent and in countries where the process of so-called women's emancipation did not bring more power to women, a lot of women, at least in my opinion, gained power through this process of becoming like men. This, of course, did not improve the general social situation in Europe.

Now we are already observing the first negative consequences on our labour market in Europe, where a lot of unemployment (which is the big problem in Europe at the moment) is affecting women. Although we have a much higher representation of women in power, they are not really women as they behave like men. Therefore, I think that Europe and the so-called industrialized countries can be a very good example for your studies, because a lot has already happened.

On Ways to Go Forward

The other thing I would like to mention is that I did not hear enough positive suggestions. What can we do? And I am talking not only about non-industrialized countries, but also about industrialized

countries, where emancipation has got a long way to go.

SL: What I would like to mention is that what we have been doing so far is not helping. Therefore we have to be more critical and look for new ways - and I am with you looking for new ways. As I said earlier, I am a gender consultant and in most cases I try to look for answers. When we are getting aid in Africa I found that one of the things which helps is to compare the donor. I always say there are road blocks to women's empowerment and if we get a donor to come and help us, we get double road blocks. What happens is that there is a connivance between the northern patriarchy and the southern patriarchy which makes it even more difficult. What I try to do in this situation is to do an exposé.

Nevertheless, that is only the beginning. There are no concrete answers so that we really have to look for new ways. During this panel here, I cannot go into the "how to", because it really depends on where you are. You cannot just pick up what somebody else does in South Africa and try it in Bangladesh the same way. It is all very subjective and very related to the environment you are in so that each time we have to analyse and come up with different answers. But maybe what we can share is the process. So for me, the quick answer I can give you is that we have to keep on looking and keep on making mistakes and learning from the mistakes. And collaborating of course, both, south to south and north to south.

On Limits of Formal Education

Female Participant: One of the themes that have come out is that formal education does not support empowering, or, to put it in other terms, that formal education has limits in what refers to the possibility of liberating women. The good message that we are getting today is that attention is being given to education within the processes of development. You know that for a long time other investments were considered more important, but now education is highlighted as a key investment to engage in. On the other hand, exaggerated trust and hopes in the power of education to enable these changes has been created. I do not believe that formal education cannot be transformed, but there are in fact only minimal things that can be done.

Questions of content, processes, dynamics and of the interaction between school and community definitely have to be at the core of these changes, not to mention changes in systems of society. But it is quite clear, especially when you do a review of the literature and see what has been accomplished through formal education that you get the impression that education can change your life and you strive for it. And yet, when you actually get it, you find that there are still many limitations. So the point to be made here is that formal education has many limitations as an empowering mechanism.

On Possibilities of Non-formal Education

The second theme that is coming up from this discussion is that informal education or the non-formal education that goes outside the educational system has many empowering possibilities. It has innovative modes of delivery, innovative content and exercises, and the ways the content is used goes beyond what we have grown to accept as formal education. We can have transformation. The problem with non-formal education is that there are people from very different backgrounds. With formal education, more young people can be reached

who will become the trained minds and part of the professional elite of a country, albeit in small numbers. Through non-formal education, we are successfully working with low-income women.

Linking Formal and Non-formal Education

So I think the challenge that we have in the women's movement is to try to link the young people's education that occurs through the formal system with the adult people's education that happens through the non-formal system. If you look at the network of international agencies, they express their strong commitment to working on gender issues. Still, when they come to define what they actually mean by gender issues in education, it actually boils down to girls' education. In other words, they are most happy to help young girls get literacy and basis skills, but the idea of having a whole package that goes from infancy to adulthood is a very contested issue.

On Transforming Discourses

There are two other things which have come up from this discussion. Firstly, how do we encourage this reexamination of our social system? Going back to the title of this panel you know very well that vocabulary shapes concepts and concepts in turn shape identities. The question now is how to develop this transformation discourse, how to use words and sentences that alter our reality and/or open possibilities for alternative ones. The last theme that has come up is also dealing with discourse. How do we engage in discourses, how do we engage in arguments that take the concepts and put them in a different way? An example of this would be how to change the discourse in order to counter gender discrimination.

Sharing of experience: I am from Mexico and I have been working with women of various cultures (including peasant women, university students, housewives, professionals and even female entrepreneurs or directors) at different social and economic levels in Mexico for 28 years. Many of them want to be a woman who does not stop being a woman and who can bring her own female conditions into the working sector, without abandoning her own environment, which is her family. Nowadays it happens quite often that a woman refrains from having a family, which might entail emotional or sexual problems. All she is looking for is to be involved in the working sector, to which she contributes all her female qualities, i.e. her preference for concrete things, her susceptivity, her willpower, capacity, tenacity, perseverance and her female strength. This strength not only refers to physical pain, but also to the perseverance in the daily struggle.

There are farming women who, without ever having left their community, are standing out as leaders and enhance cultural enrichment. This not only happens through the acquisition of literacy, but by facilitating the setting up of formal and informal educational centres in their regions. As a result, the community, both men and women, are becoming more sensitive and can integrate into the social, economic and cultural progress in these rural areas.

Therefore, not only do we have to examine those national educational projects, but we as educators and pedagogues can also look at

the series of proposals from women, which really enrich society. I am not talking about the equality of power being a fight or an inequality of inferiority. Women are equal to men in terms of dignity, willpower, intelligence, and capacities; these skills have to be developed and willpower has to be taught. This is my experience.

NS: I do not think you can argue that men and women are the same and then proceed to say that women have special responsibilities towards the families. There is a basic contradiction in that argument.

On the possibilities for the Two Voices to speak to each other

Female Participant from Argentina: For me it was most interesting to hear in what way Sara's presentation and the one our Jamaican colleague gave, were compatible. Sara talked about the two voices and our Jamaican colleague talked about the opportunities in the education of women, and how these opportunities, when put into concrete practice, turned into discrimination. The voice which spoke of education opening doors was immediately answered - in fact, the experience that education does not open all the doors for women was not only confirmed by the Jamaican colleague, but we in Argentina also made the same experience. I believe that suddenly, without having planned it, the dialogue between those two voices came to an end. I would also like to talk more about positive discrimination. I think that it is a form of opening the doors to women. I do not think that giving more opportunities to the lambs than to the wolves means discrimination of the wolves. But I would like to know your opinion on this.

SL: In spite of the fact that generally people expect women with less schooling not to understand gender issues, I experience the opposite; these women understand gender issues very well. I would like to give you one example of a rural area in Zambia where we were looking at the women's activities for UNIFEM. We wanted to know who belonged to female-headed households and so we tried different ways to find out. I will just give one example. We asked: "How many of you are widows?" And some put their hands up. Then one woman slowly raised her hand and everybody laughed. So we asked: "What is so funny about being widowed?" which made them laugh again. Then we asked a second time, but as they would not tell us, saying that she could tell herself, we asked her: "Why did everybody laugh when you put up your hand?" And she said: "Well, I am married but I am not really a widow, but the life I lead is just as good as being a widow." That woman understood gender issues and she had just demonstrated it in a different way.

Here is another example: We have one Cabinet woman in my country who in her maiden speech dissociated herself from the women's movement. She said: "I do not want you women to even call me to your organization in your five star hotels. One just has to work. I managed to get to where I am now, and this means that you just have to work." So you see the two women. For the one with schooling the burdens are still too heavy for her, because schooling has taught her: "You get ahead by doing things for yourself." The other one wanted to identify herself with the other widows, because she could see that what they are going through is the same as what she is going through. She is looking for collective action.

So what we have to do is to try and make the two voices start speaking to each other. And this is the challenge I have in my country. If they start speaking to each other it would be a way of dialoguing with one female Cabinet member. We could experience her energy and find out how she got in there in a different way. For her, on the other hand, it would be interesting to see why others are not following behind. So the challenge we have is not to continue talking about purposes, but to find ways of facing them. It is a big challenge and there are no easy answers.

So I am not surprised to hear that the previous speaker was saying that women with a profession want to get ahead and fight in their own way. In a way I was beginning to hear that maybe she is saying that the educated woman without a profession found ways of dealing with her family and getting on with it. I congratulate that woman, but does she have to do it in such a hard way? I mean it is unjust that she should get her profession in such a hard way. Other people have made it, but do we have to do it the same way? I know there are not very many women following other people, because it is just a hard way, and it is not worth it. At least some people realize that it is not worth it. In the end I am going to start being discriminated again. So this is what we have to start looking at. We are looking for gender justice.

On Affirmative Action

AS: Affirmative action was mentioned here in three different instances. It was firstly mentioned with the vocational training programme that we have in Jamaica, which is a deliberate policy to provide some form of employment. The vocational training programme is both, a type of on-the-job training as well as a classroom training programme and its policy is to provide employment for young people and especially for young women. However, even though there is affirmative action in terms of training for these women and of finding employment for them, they have been trained in these very stereotypical feminine areas. As I mentioned already, these are areas that are useless when it comes to finding a job. Once their training is completed, the women usually cannot find work because there is no place for them - and those who do find employment work in the sweatshops and the free zones, where they do sewing, cookery and that type of thing.

The common entrance examination is another area in which there is affirmative action and here, it is in favour of males. However, this affirmative action also works in favour of females in the urban areas and against females in the rural areas, because girls in the rural areas need to get higher grades in order to pass than girls in the urban areas. I do not support this form of affirmative action, whether it is in favour of men or women, whether it is in favour of rural or urban women.

Thirdly, the association of women's organizations in Jamaica cultivates in its members policies of mainly hiring women who have certain qualifications for jobs. Nevertheless, I believe that decisions referring to employment should above all be based on qualifications, on absolute qualifications. So if a man and a woman apply for a job and both of them are equally qualified, what do you do? I am not sure. However, if a man and a woman apply for a

job and the man is more qualified than the woman, and all other things are equal, I think that man deserves the job. And if a man and a woman apply for a job and the woman is more qualified than the man, I think that the woman deserves to get that job. So, I personally do not support affirmative action which is going to discriminate against one sex or the other, against one class or the other, against people in rural areas as opposed to those in urban areas.

NS: In my opinion, affirmative action is an imperfect but necessary mechanism. If you are facing discrimination which is institutional in nature, you have to break those barriers, and breaking those barriers will need some kind of public institutional legislation and some kind of governmental support. Affirmative action is not perfect, and it is true that some men might be hurt. But going back to the question of creating a new social equilibrium, how do you accomplish such a thing without having any social cost? In the United States, there is a very strong resistance to affirmative action,

both along the lines of racial affirmative action and gender affirmative action. From their point of view, enough has been done, but empirically this is not true. Not enough has been done . What happens is that men feel that it has been sufficiently long and they want to get rid of it. Nevertheless, if you look at the historical trajectory of countries that have been able to achieve at least desirable and satisfactory levels of men's and women's representations in various spheres of social life, you will find that such mechanisms have been accepted and have been paid for by civil society at some point in its history. I do not really believe that you get anything for free as there is always someone who has to pay for it. It is only true that some of the men say: "Why should we, the men of today, have to pay for the things of the men of tomorrow?" which is a nice syllogism, but in terms of getting into a new social equilibrium, there are no easy ways. Affirmative action is far from being perfect, but tell me something better. We have to try; we have to give it an opportunity to create a new balance between the individuals that form our society.

SL: I would like to add that I agree with Anne-Marie that unplanned and not strategic affirmative action is negative in the end, because it has to be planned. What happens is that affirmative action is made to be the answer to our problems, which is the same as having unlimited faith in schooling and in thinking that schooling will solve everything. We need much, much more than that. Basically, we need to give people skills, but we also need to remove discrimination that will stop these people using their skills. The problem we have with the way affirmative action is being done is that it is seen as the final result, as the answer. Instead, it should be seen as a temporary measure to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

In order to illustrate this, I would like to make a comparison with sports as I used to be an athlete before. The situation is just as when you run a race. When you are running around a curve, there are some people on the outer rows who are put at the far end, far ahead of you. So that you seem to be left behind despite the fact that you are going to have less surface to run. That is how we should look at affirmative action! The reality is that even though they are going to run the same race there is a big gap between them as some are on the outer bend and some are on

the inner bend. In fact, those on the outer bend have to be put on another level in order to start the same way. Obviously, the one who is going to round the outer bend would otherwise lose without even having had a chance.

Secondly, I said that affirmative action is a temporary measure. There has to be something concrete for closing the gaps, but often there is not. People do not look or check, they do not say: "After five years we are going to go back, and see whether the gaps are closing or not". This is necessary, though, because if you review afterwards and find that the gaps are closing, then you will certainly give it another two years. And if you find that the gaps are closing, you have accelerated evolution, and you are together. Then you move and you have to remove the affirmative action as it is no longer necessary. Now your next job is to make sure that the equilibrium which you have reached is maintained. So you have to come up with strategies to ensure this process, because as long as there is a gender gap, you do not know whether you are winning or not. So affirmative action as a temporary measure is necessary to bridge the gap, because it will take many years until we will have equal chances. If we wait for the evolution to take place we will wait forever.

NS: I would just like to add something to the comment Sara has made. In my opinion we should add that affirmative action should not be time-related, but that it has to be measured by objectives and goals that are being achieved. In the United States people would argue that affirmative action was meant to be a temporary action and that they have given it enough time. If you follow that argument, time has passed, but if you evaluate it through significant goals which have been achieved, you get a different story. So maybe we should have affirmative action, but we ought to peg it to performance rather than to a specific time.

Participant from the UK: I just wanted to say something about the action that has been happening in the UK. In the last election, the Labour Party took action to enable women members of parliament (MPs) to gain safe seats, and as a result we now have a large number of women MPs who have children. For the first time, women form big groups which causes a lot of changes. In the House of Commons, for example, where they had shooting ranges before, but no nursery provision and not enough toilets for women, they are going to change all this. So, this is in a way a good example of how affirmative action can overcome obstacles by which women have been systematically disadvantaged.

But interestingly enough, at the moment there is a big fuss in Britain about the over-achievements of girls compared with boys. And as a result of that, we discovered that twenty years ago, when it came to taking supposedly independent tests for boys and girls to go to particular sorts of schools, it was the boys who actually were enabled to go to higher schools with lesser qualifications than girls. If that had not happened, then there would have been more girls than boys in grammar schools. So it seems that positive action has happened all the time, just that it was mostly in favour of boys and men - only when it happens in favour of girls and women there is a fuss made about it. I think we have to bear that in mind!

Female Participant from Angola: Concerning the question of discrimination, I would like to say that in my country there are eight women in government. We have 9.5% of women in parliament, but this number went down in the elections. Furthermore, a lot of women go to university or have any other form of higher education. On the other hand, a lot of women in our country are illiterate and have to be educated. In my country, the question of discrimination is raised in certain circles of society and is seen as a problem of changing mentality. This means that a boy should be educated from primary school onwards in the area of equality. He has to learn that both at home and at school, he has to do the same things as women and that women are able to do the same things men. This way, we will achieve a lot more in the future, as far as questions of discrimination are concerned. This is the problem in my country and civil society does not see this question.

Participant: I am Aisha Bah from UNESCO and I would like to make a short statement. Since I came into this room, I noticed that there were very few men. I wonder why males do not come whenever there is a theme on women. We have learned so much today and I think they are the ones who need to know what you have said. I also hope that those men who are here came on their behalf, not because the chief of mission had said: "You go there!" I hope that they came because they wanted to be here.

NS: To make a precise statement: It is not that men are not here. They just happen to be in very small numbers. I think we have one man who wants to talk.

On Political will

Male participant: I am from Kenya and I work for a non-governmental organization which operates from the grassroots. My organization and me in particular, we are concerned about the empowerment of women. Therefore, I would like to draw the attention to one point which has not been looked at so far: the political will. In my opinion, the political will in our countries is creating a big problem for the emancipation of women. When we talk about reforms in our countries, whether they are political or economic reforms, where do we place the women? We have to start right from the family level and come up to where we are at this particular moment. The whole question of fairness in all aspects of life and at places of work has to be looked at more critically. I would like us to look at the analysis of fairness and justice concerning the place of women in society - where we work, where we operate, and so on.

As I also coordinate community development projects, I have observed that with some particular issues, men simply come in when they realize that they can benefit from this particular project. These benefits may be of a political or an economic nature. If they want to get something out of it politically, they rush to these projects; if they want to get something of an economic nature, they rush to those projects. At times they even accompany the women. It is a women's organization, so why are the men escorting the women? What is the whole purpose? These are the questions which we are raising.

Another thing I would like to mention here is this: Women are sometimes also enemies

of other women. For example, those women who work in high positions in politics actually suppress other women in coalition with men. I remember one female cabinet minister coming to a place where I work. She was saying: "What does that a rural woman, or even man, know about development? They need to be told." According to her, education has to be from top downwards and not from down upwards. And she did not believe in the woman's capacity to think critically about her situation and to analyse it.

In my opinion, the participatory aspects of development need to be incorporated into the thinking of all women, because that is the genuine and participatory approach - decision making which is genuinely undertaken by women is what we are talking about. It is empowerment from within, as one of the presenters has put it. So that is all I can see at the moment, but I am impressed by the discussion. Let us look at it even more and more critically and remove all the impediments along our way which refrain us from being a person who allows for the empowerment of women to continue.

Male Participant: Just let me make one comment. Women always ask for equality. They are 50% of the earth's population, but they give birth to the other half, so I think they have to demand more than equality.

On taking action

Female Participant: I am from the region of Valencia in Spain. Although we might not have this type of educational discrimination of women you were talking about in Spain, the presentation of our Canadian colleague was very interesting for me. She implemented a training programme and asked educators, psychologist and therapists what to do to ensure that students were interested in the course and stayed on. I am a student and we have drawn up a chart, containing a number of duties and rights, which we submitted to our professors and to the administration. One of the points was that the curricula should not be already prepared and firmly set up when we return to class in September/October. Instead, we asked for a cooperation between professionals, educators und us, the students. Another important point for us was the assessment of our general knowledge, because sometimes we are treated as if we did not know anything about theory or practice. However, due to the fact that we are adults and that we therefore have long-term experience, we do know a lot about practice and we want these experiences to be acknowledged.

JH: I do not want to answer at any length, I just want to say that I am just a little concerned that perhaps I have not been as clear as I meant to be. I was not talking about a training programme, I was talking about research, I wanted to look at. I was not suggesting that students were just bored with an inadequate curriculum in Canada and that it was different elsewhere. I wanted to really talk about the ways in which violence impeded learning. But I think it is wonderful that you are pushing a sense of rights to have a curriculum that is relevant, and I think that is a really central issue.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE UNESCO PROAP AND ASPBAE RESEARCH ON GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Vimala Ramachandran

I live in a city called Jaipur and I have been working in the area of women's education for about ten years. Prior to this, I was teaching political science in the University of Delhi. So I moved from an academic engagement to working with women's education.

Today's panel is an interesting one because we are trying to raise the question of how gender issues are dealt with within the education system. Therefore it is not really a case study in the strict sense. Instead, we are just trying to present issues which have emerged in our various efforts to introduce gender issues into the settings we work in. I am actually going to present a synthesis of a study which was sponsored by UNESCO PROAP and ASPBAE. It is a study on the status of women's and girls' education in South Asia, conducted by four different researchers in different countries: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. What I am going to present you are really the findings and the main overview of the synthesis of the study.

In fact, when we come to any international forum, people from South Asia are always in a very difficult position. At one level there are many of us here who speak English, thus we seem to be quite well educated. Furthermore, many South Asians seem to be in important positions across the world. But if you look at the educational achievements of South Asia, it is perhaps the worst system in the world. So you really have a situation in which a lot of my friends who live in Europe and in the United States ask: "Why is it so? Why is it that there is such a major difference in South Asia between a small section of educated people and a vast majority of illiterate people who do not have access to any kind of education?" This was the main question with which we started our study.

Our study is not about statistics or data, about how many women are literate or how many women are not, but it tries to find out the reasons why South Asia has really lagged behind in the last fifty years. Since the post-war period (the1950s), most other countries in the Asian region invested in education. You are all aware of the miracle of South East Asia, of what has been happening in South East Asia and China. And yet, when it comes to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutani, we have a situation in which women's education has been neglected. Even though this topic is mentioned in all the policy documents and in every single government statement, in reality, women's education and education in general has never been a political priority. Looking at the reasons, we try to find out what the situation today is like.

What is the paradoxical situation in the South Asian region? Political leaders, administrators, and policy-makers - all of them are aware of the magnitude of the problem. In fact, every single policy document of these four countries talks about

the importance of women's education. We are also signatories of all international agreements and contracts on the importance of girls' education. But, what happened after that? If you look at reality in the region, you will find that whatever resources, whatever money is available, it is spread thinly across the region. You will find some government and some private institutions which are of excellent quality, providing very good quality education. But 80% of our public school system is in a really bad shape. In fact you find children who go to these schools really cannot acquire even basic educational competence. There are a lot of government programmes and programmes based on foreign aid for education in the entire region, but again you have small projects, which are doing extremely well, while around them you have an enormous amount of problems. So you have a sharp contrast between an interesting project in one village, whereas in the neighbouring 100 or 200 villages, no functioning school can be found.

Some of you must have heard about the massive literacy campaigns being conducted in India. Despite literacy campaigns and adult education programmes, the number of illiterates does not really seem to be coming down in absolute numbers. The management systems in our countries are really not quite geared to working with so many people who have to be educated. So you have a major management problem, even though the management of good institutions is excellent. Again you have a very wide variation: You have excellent institutions of technology and medicine, which are managed extremely well, and you have the school system or adult education programmes, which are managed very badly. And, of course, it is said in the region that literacy is not a political priority, because if the majority of the people remains illiterate, it is easier to manage that kind of society politically. Therefore, the reason given for the low literacy rate in the South Asian region is that education is not of political priority in reality, even though it is an important issue on paper. This is the paradox of South Asia. You have a situation, in which we say all the right things, but somehow, when it comes to demonstrating what is really happening in the field, there seems to be a very, very wide gap between what we say and what we do.

I would like to just briefly dwell on some of the reasons. I will not present the entire paper, because it would be too long, but I would like to dwell on some of the reasons. There is a group of people in the region who were asking themselves: Why can policy never become reality, even though we have been trying to push gender issues, push the education of girls, push the education of women into policy documents? Why is it that we succeed in making policies, that we succeed in bringing out excellent documents, but somehow, when it comes to actually implementing it, there is a problem?" So we looked at all the four South Asian case studies and we came up with four or five reasons.

The first reason is really that we have not been able to make the education system actually work towards the education of girls or women. As you are aware, over 70% of the illiterate in this region are women, and in some areas the rate is as high as 85%. In other words the female literacy rate is as low as 15%, while male literacy rates are extremely high. This shows that even though the education system exists, it does not work towards girls' education. And why doesn't

the system work towards girls' education although we have five important policy interventions in this region?

All the four countries offer free access or scholarships for girls; we have got a system of free uniforms; and we have a system where the girls' education is actually subsidized by the government. So in fact we have really good policies. But in implementing, there are so many snags. In our education system, the scholarships which are supposedly meant for girls, somehow do not reach them. The most important reason they give is that unless you have female teachers, you cannot have girls coming to school. For 50 years now, we have had policies of having female teachers, but in reality, you have a proportion of about 20% teachers who are female and 80% teachers who are male in the rural areas of India. So you have a system that just cannot work towards the objectives.

Another reason which came out of a survey which was done very recently was that the administrators, the people who actually administer the programme, do not believe girls' education to be important. You have the politics of the country which postulates that girls' education is important and you have people in the federal government who say girls' education is important, but the people who are actually administering the programme down at the district level or at the village level do not feel girls' education is important. This is why we cannot get the general education system to work towards girls' education, or to get girls to school, or even to run literacy programmes for women.

Where these programmes have been run, they have been run as women's programmes. Nevertheless, while the general education system does not support girls' education, we have some special programmes which do. So you have this divergence that the main system does not work towards girls' education while special projects or special programmes are the only ones that work towards women's and girls' education.

The second reason which came out in the South Asian region was that some of the strategies we adopted did not work. As many of you are aware since the first women's decade in the 70s, we felt that a separate women's department, a separate women's cell, or a separate women's project would help us meet our goal. But our experience has been that this has not helped us too much in the region. Obviously, this is due to the fact that once the entire system is only geared towards a general education and you create a separate cell or a separate unit for girls' education, the rest of the administrative system will say: "Girls' education is not our problem. The girls/women cell will look after it. They have got their special projects, but we will go on doing what we want to do." So we did get special programmes, but we were not able to influence the main system. As a result, even many of us who have been part of the women's movement since the early seventies argued against special women's cells and special women's programmes. Then we started wondering what we could do.

On the one hand we did not want to refrain from having a separate cell, because we need something to focus on girls' education, on the other hand we also need to enter the mainstream. And in the region you find that, if you are part of the women's cell or the women's ministry, you have very little influence on the mainstream. And we in

South Asia have been trying to grapple with this problem. So many of us said: "Ok, we won't work in special women's cells; we will go into the mainstream."

But in the mainstream we have a very classic example of a very large programme on vocational training that was started with the support of the World Bank. There was not a single course or a single programme, which was geared to the sector of the labour market women work in which is the service sector. They work as typists or as computer operators, but the entire programmes were only geared towards vocational education for the male oriented job market. So you have women who leave school, not having any kind of vocational training to go for. And the entire technical education division of the ministry in India did not even think about it. In fact, this programme went on for seven years, until they woke up and said: "Hey, we are not doing anything for girls' education, or girls' vocational education." So it is a kind of blindness which comes about. Thus, we have been trying to find a solution. We asked for separate allocations and we got them, but then we were pushed aside, and the mainstream as well. Now, when we try to enter the mainstream, we really have to fight a different battle, because the rules of the game are very different there. In fact, if any of us raises a gender issue, they say: "Oh, you women, you always come and talk about women. Why don't we talk about people? As if we men were not people." So this kind of tension which we have within the education system between being special and separate, and being inside has been a major problem. I am sure all my friends from other countries will be facing the same. To a certain extent we have been able to break the barrier and help, but in education we have still not been able to do this.

The third reason that came up, which was quite interesting, was that advocacy is missing. You find that remarkable silence whether in the media, the newspapers, the political speeches of our political parties, the pre-election programmes. They are all silent about girls' and women's education. It is a remarkable silence, which sometimes one does not understand. We say that we are entering the global economy and that we need trained manpower or women power. We need educated people, but the political agenda in the country is completely and totally silent. And women who have entered the political arena are not raising this issue either. In fact, not just women, but most of the political movements in India - except for the reformers, the social reformers or some missionaries, or some little movements here and there - do not mention this issue.

Education has never been on the agenda. And that is true even for the women's movement in India: We did not raise education as a major issue. We talked about rights; we talked about equal wages; we talked about employment; we talked about domestic violence; we talked about violence in the public sphere, but even we remained silent on education. So there is a kind of conspiracy, a silent conspiracy or silence on women's education. It is really neither on the political agenda nor on the social agenda. And that only government documents talk about it is not just true for India, this is true for the other South Asian countries as well. But government documents do not help us.

So you see, when we talk about girls and about raising gender issues in education,

many of us in the South Asian region are feeling very trapped. Because at one level, the schools are there. Technically boys and girls can go to school; technically all the colleges and universities are open to boys and girls. It is the social barrier, the cultural barrier, which prevents girls and women from entering the educational mainstream and this is something we have not addressed. There is no point in opening more schools, unless you can address the question of how women can actually come out of their homes and participate in educational processes. And even if they do, in fact almost 98% of all women who enter the school system drop out after six or seven years. So it is only 2% who actually go in for post-secondary education. So it is not just literacy, it is education at various levels. Maybe the only conclusion that we can draw is that we really need a very strong advocacy of the movement in this region.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE INTENTION AND ACTION: AN OVERVIEW OF GIRLS AND WOMEN'S ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

Vimla Ramachandran

The South Asian region has been one of the greatest enigmas of modern times. At one level this region has been exposed to modern education for almost two centuries. The six countries of this region are rich in technical (educated) manpower and account for a large proportion of skilled migrants across the developed world. Familiarity with the English language, exposure to modern communication and linkages with the global economy gave this region a head-start in the immediate post-war period. Yet, over the past fifty years it has been witness to growing poverty, illiteracy, internal strife, and deterioration in the quality of life of a significant proportion of its population. Governments in the region have publicly committed themselves to Universal Elementary Education, yet approaching the turn of the century, illiteracy levels (with the exception of Sri Lanka) are unacceptably high. Our human development record is also a cause for concern.

> Looking at the pattern of illiteracy in societies, one cannot but conclude that the degree and persistence of illiteracy reflects structural imbalances in a society, such as the uneven distribution of political and economic power, the uneven way in which political and economic policies and priorities are determined, and the uneven way in which the systems and in situations implementing those policies are organized. The extent of illiteracy in a nation is a measure of that nations's degree of attachment to social justice ... The sad irony of illiteracy is that those who most need access to knowledge, information and skills, by which they may pull themselves out of a disadvantageous situation, are the ones most deprived of it ...
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> [Mansoor Ahmed, 1992][1]

The situation in the region has been well documented and successive *Human Development Reports* have reiterated the importance of investing in human beings to pull them out of the vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy, poor health, and an abysmal quality of life. Poised at the turn of the century, we have to ask ourselves if we wish to step into the next century carrying the baggage of backwardness. In a recent launch of *Human Development in South Asia* (April 1997) in Islamabad, the enormity of the problem of backwardness was recaptured: South Asia is fast emerging as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished, the least gender sensitive - indeed, the most deprived region in the world. Yet it continues to make more investment in arms than in the education and health of its people[2].

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1 Mansoor Ahmed, "Literacy in the Larger Context", in *The Annals: World Literacy in the Year 2000*, March 1992.

2 Mahabub ul Haq, *Human Development in South Asia 1987*, Human Development Centre and Oxford University Press, Islamabad,

Looking back to the immediate post-war years, many East and South-East Asian nations opted for few critical interventions, namely: investment in education[3] (universal elementary education and high quality technical and, vocational education at different levels), outward looking trade strategies, and institutional reforms (including sweeping land reforms that put an end to feudal relations, attitudes, and social structures, and a new sense of work ethic through administrative reforms), mobilizing savings and investments, and good governance. The results are there for all to see.

Commenting on the wide divergence between South and South-east Asia, Mr Mahbub ul Haq[4] observed that the problem is really one of political will. Our political leaders did not recognize that investing in human beings, enhancing their capability to deal with forces of modernization, industrialization, and globalization from a position of strength, is bound to pay rich dividends to all, rich and poor alike. Keeping the vast majority illiterate, physically weak, and in abject poverty helps no one in the long run.

The political, social, and economic élite of South Asia (with the exception of Sri Lanka) gave little importance to education of all. Centuries of caste and community-based inequalities were reflected in the education system. A small but powerful middle-class benefited from national educational institutions. While a small proportion of public institutions fared well and achieved international standards, the mass of the people were left grappling with poor quality education. Women's education, apart from the vocal middle-class, was never a priority.

As a result of this short-sightedness, the South Asian countries have become trapped in a vicious circle of short-term political survival and long-term deterioration. Given the volatile political scenario in the region, leaders have little energy to expend on far-sighted human development politicies.

April 1997.

3 "Whatever the other differences in analysis, there is a consensus on the aspect: East Asia's focus on primary education. East Asia not only spent two to three time more on education out of its GNP than did South Asia, it also emphasized universal, high-quality primary education, accompanied by a largely self-financed university system ... Another major emphasis was in the relative emphasis on technical education: secondary school technical enrolment is 18.6 in South Korea compared to 0.7 per cent in Bangladesh and 1.6 per cent in Pakistan. Thus, East Asia invested much more than South Asia in education, and within the education field, placed much greater emphasis on primary education and technical skill." *Human Development in South Asia*, 1977.

4 Pakistan Television Panel discussion broadcast on 13 April 1997.

This accentuates existing social, economic, and political problems, piercing us to spend more time and energy on political fire-fighting.

Can we, as citizens of the region, raise our voices to implore our leaders to put basic education and primary health care on the national agenda? Can we, as concerned development practitioners, administrators, social activists, researchers, and opinion-makers mount an intensive campaign to force attention? Can we, as international NGOs and as multilateral agencies initiate a process that will support a region-wide campaign to put education, especially of girls and women, on the priority list? This overview attempts to capture the essence of the debate reflected in the country studies and also draws upon the personal experience of all those who participated in the six months' long consultative process.

Background of the study

The Asia South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE) in collaboration with UNESCO-PROAP initiated a four-country[5] study on girls´ and women´s access to basic education. Researchers with experience in the development sector were identified to prepare the country studies. One of them was chosen as the regional coordinator with the task to develop a conceptual framework, provide technical support where necessary, and put the four country studies together to form a regional overview. At the outset, it was clarified that each country study would remain a stand alone piece and the regional overview would draw upon the issues raised in them.

Producing yet another regional document on girls´ and women´s education did not evoke much interest. The group of researchers noted that over the past ten years there have been innumerable workshops and meetings on women´s education, the girls', and on innovations/micro-experiences of NGOs. Similarly, many government level meetings of the SAARC countries focused on the girl child and women´s education, etc. There has been a virtual explosion of reports, case studies, and conferences on women´s development and related issues. Our principal concern was how this would be different. How could this exercise carry the debate forward and identify strategic interventions to bridge the gaping schism between *intention* and *action*? Would it be an enriching exercise or yet another report to be consigned to the recesses of an overflowing cupboard.

After a series of preliminary discussions a conceptual framework was evolved. It was decided that this process would focus on the reasons behind the persistent gaps between the "publicly stated intentions" of the governments concerned and actual experience on the ground. All the countries involved in the study had good policies. For almost fifty years political leaders have talked about the importance of educating women and girls. Yet, when we look at actual achievements, there is a big gap. Good policies and programmes have failed to make a dent.

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[5] The initial proposal included five countries, namely Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and India. However, due to some administrative problems, Bhutan did not participate.

Most discussions on education tend to separate official policies, programmes, and experiences from those of the non-government sector. They are often juxtaposed as two ends of a spectrum. The debate on transferring NGO experiences to the mainstream have been fraught with problems. Officials argue that the scale at which change has to be initiated within the government system generates its own momentum. Given that new ideas have to filter through layers of bureaucracy, communicating a novel concept is not easy. The inherent logic of an impersonal "system" has to be considered when large- scale, systems are involved. Experienced administrators who sought to make a difference and initiate change have argued that it is difficult to predict how change occurs. Political climate, administrative ethos (unique to each region of a large country), societal dynamics, all influence outcome.

Many NGO advocates do not appreciate these problems, leading to a breakdown in dialogue between NGOs and the government. In the same vein, NGO advocates point out that national models are difficult to implement, especially in the social sectors. Change can be initiated in specific areas with clearly articulated region-specific issues. It is possible to draw generic lessons from NGO experiences and adapt them to specific regions/communities. Most problems related to educational access of girls, their retention in the school system, convincing the community of the relevance of education in their daily lives, and empowering people to negotiate the world from a position of strength, can be adapted into the government system. NGO advocates argue that all that is required is committed leadership and motivated staff. Financial resources, they emphasize, are secondary. Human resources are primary. It would almost appear that the government and non-government advocates are talking in two different languages.

Over the past ten years there has been considerable discussion on whether NGOs really have all the answers. There is a tendency among some social reformers, opinion leaders, officials, media persons, donors, and multilateral agencies to project NGOs as the repository of innovation, commitment, and decentralization. At the other end of the spectrum, there are many people within the government, in the media, and in the corporate sector who are inherently suspicious of NGOs. They argue that NGOs primarily function as sub-contractors, some well, some not so well, and a significant number quite badly. The question of accountability and cost-effectiveness comes to the fore.

> One of the questions that invariably comes up in discussions on the NGO-Government relationship is whether there is any intrinsic difference between "Government" and 'NGO'. Many people argue that there are some generic characteristic particular to each sector. The common perception is that NGOs are "by their very nature" flexible, participatory, gender sensitive, and transparent, and government carries the baggage of red-tapism and rigidity. However, experience has shown that there is tremendous variation in both sectors. Some government programmes and departments have functioned with remarkable sensitivity and transparency under a dynamic head, and there have been instances when NGOs have been rigid, rule bound, corrupt, and insensitive. Be it NGOs or government institutions, both are rooted in society, and changing values are manifested in all institutions. Corruption, manipulation, power and control (and gender sensitivity!!) are not the exclusive preserve of government institutions; NGOs certainly

> are not free from it. Therefore, any discussion on partnership must begin with a recognition of this fundamental issue.[6]

Keeping this debate in view, the conceptual framework for this initiative called for a more nuanced approach to the NGO-Government debate. It was therefore decided to dwell upon the limitations of each sector and capture the inherent contradictions within the NGO sector, the government system, and among the political élite.

Gender sensitivity is not one of the strong points of the NGO sector; women within organizations have had to struggle to be heard. Many NGOs in the region run gender indifferent programs. Male dominated/patriarchal organizations have actively resisted truly empowering processes and programmes. It was felt that this aspect of the NGO community needs to be captured, if we are really serious about entering into a meaningful dialogue with the Government.

While many NGO experiences have made a difference,[7] some pilot initiatives in the government sector have been able to make considerable progress in some areas. These have been documented and discussed in national and international meetings. Yet mainstreaming micro experiences or large regional experiences has been a daunting prospect. Governments have remained unmoved, plugging along in the same way decade after decade. Recapturing oft-repeated reasons for government inability to mainstream lessons from pilot experiments were identified as important areas for enquiry. Issues ranging from the nature of the administration, the planning process, need for standardization, nationally acceptable norms, and a host of "reasons of state" to commonplace arguments of the power élite and opinion-makers were included in the framework. This is of particular importance when it comes to girls' and women's education. Public and formal pronouncements at national and international conclaves mean little when these are ignored at the time of priority setting and implementation.

Given this situation, one of the principal objectives of this initiative was to break the deadlock and initiate a meaningful dialogue between the government and NGO advocates. To this end, it was decided that the country studies would draw on NGO experiences and lessons from special or pilot projects of the government and weave them into the narrative with a view to exploring why the lessons of such valuable experiences have not been integrated into the central planning process and the delivery system.

Issues highlighted in the country studies

Integrating gender issues into mainstream educational programmes has not been easy. For over two decades governments, NGOs, and international agencies have been grappling with the problem of changing the

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6 Vimla Ramachandran, "Equality Among Unequal Parties: Relationship Between NGOs and Government", *The Administrator*, vol. XI. July-Sept. 1995.

7 The experience of BRAC in Bangladesh, *cheli-beti* in Nepal, Shiksha Karmi in India have attracted worldwide attention.

dominant mindset that accords little value to education as a tool for gender equality. Notwithstanding cultural and social factors, increasing girls' participation and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor and between men and women was recognized as an important strategy in achieving the goal of Education For All. To this end, all the countries in the region adopted specific policies, namely:

- All four countries set up separate women´s education units or cells within the government, special projects and programmes were designed to promote girls´education, and over the past fifteen years gender specialists (Consultants) were appointed at various levels and in a wide range of institutions and programmes.

- All the four countries highlighted the importance of providing primary schools within walking distance, in closer proximity of dwelling units, to enhance girls´ access.

- Provision of child care facilities / crèches within reach, with a view to enabling young girls to leave their siblings during school hours has been an important recommendation across the region. However, implementation of this policy has been fraught with problems.

- Some countries recognized the importance of providing escorts for girls, if school is at a distance from the dwelling. Again, implementation of such policies have remained problematic.

- All four countries acknowledged the importance of flexible school timings and a region-specific school calendar. In this case too, implementation has been a major issue because of resistance from teachers´ associations and the bureaucracy.

- All four countries provided for alternative modes of schooling, combining the formal with non-formal : public schools with educational facilities located in religious and cultural institutions, co-educational facilities alongside girls´ schools, etc.

- All the countries declared that providing more women teachers in rural areas was an essential strategy for the promotion of girls education. To this end, strategies to expand the pool of women teachers by lowering qualifications, intensive training, regular educational support, condensed courses for school drop-outs to be trained to work as teachers, security for outstation teachers, residential accommodation, etc. were adopted at different points of time over the past fifty years.

- Making curricula relevant to the lives of poor women has been discussed in all four countries. This was adopted in response to the problem of the relevance of education in the lives of women.

- Incentives like uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, attendance scholarships, free bus passes, etc.

have been an important part of the strategy to promote girls' enrolment. There has, however, been no assessment of the effectiveness of incentives and its impact on girls' enrolment.

- Reviewing the impact of specific policies and programmes, it emerged that while most of the above recommendations have been repeated ad infinitum over the past fifty years, (in the case of Bangladesh twenty-five years), their impact has been marginal. Interviews with senior administrators and retired civil servants revealed that implementation of piece-meal recommendations in a system that is really not geared towards universal elementary education has yielded little result. While there has been some impact, a problem of such magnitude demands a holistic approach. Ensuring every child - boys and girls - goes to school requires political will. Prevalent social attitudes, poor quality schools, the resource crunch, unmotivated teachers, and insensitive administration all converge to defeat the very purpose of good intentioned policies and programmes. Some officials acknowledge success in select pockets and admit that unless the entire system is geared towards bridging the gap, little will change.

Priority areas for action in the immediate future

Where do we go from here? Can we, as citizens of this region, as administrators and as social activists, sit back defeated? Can we pool our collective experiences and identify priority areas for action? As a first step, the group of researchers and activists involved in this study identified five critical areas for introspection. Initiating a regional debate on the effectiveness of oft-repeated solutions could provide us with concrete answers. The following three issues were identified as priority areas for action in the immediate future.

1. *Making the system work to achieve stated national goals*

Almost all studies and reports done on girls' and women's education (including that in this volume) come up with a familiar list of recommendations, namely:

- reversal of the planning process from being top-down to one that responds to the needs of women: change the supervisory system from an inspectorial mode to a supportive mode; introduce localized school management through policy reform, etc.;

- avoid over-generalization of gender issues as region, community, and habitation-specific constraints preclude global solutions; move from a crisis management approach to one based on long-term strategic planning; train educational service providers to become responsive to the needs of women, etc.;

- introduce policy reform and overhaul grievance-redressal systems to address low teacher motivation, encourage women to come forward to work as teachers by providing a supportive work environment, etc.;

- weed out inefficiency and corruption in the incentives programme and ensure that the incentives meant for girls actually reach them; compensate families for the opportunity cost of sending girls to school; provide crèches and pre-school facilities in all villages, hamlets, and urban dwellings;
- generate and maintain gender desegregated data at all levels to sensitize educational administrators and teachers about gender issues in access and retention;
- invest a larger proportion of GNP on basic education in general and women´s education in particular.

People working within the government, training institutions, and in donor agencies respond to such a list by asking how such systematic changes can be brought about. It is easy to come up with a list of recommendations. Operationalizing them in an apathetic environment is not easy. It is important to acknowledge the operational problems, and at the same time it becomes a moral responsibility of the advocates of girls´ education to work with interested officials and donors to find ways and means of making the system work.

To begin with, it would be worthwhile to first prioritize intervention necessary to make the system work. This would necessarily have to be done country-wise. As a next step, a small team of administrators and educational planners could identify specific bottlenecks in the implementation of a cluster of strategies or plans. Classifying them according to the levels they have to deal with and by the inputs necessary to make a difference could be a good starting point. Such a national exercise could lead to a working document on management issues in girls´and women´s education. This could be followed by concrete action plans to suit the specific needs and capabilities of each country, or even a specific area within a country.

In short, what is required is a thorough analysis of management issues with a view to overcoming bottlenecks. Developing long-term strategies along with clear action plans for enhancement of girls´and women´s access to education is the overriding need of the hour. To this end, it is important to move from generalized problems and solutions to programme (region or issue based) specific planning.

The group of researchers participating in this exercise came up with few preliminary suggestions. This is purely indicative and would have to be adapted to the needs of each country.

A. Undertake a thorough review of the effectiveness of incentives schemes like free textbooks, uniforms, token scholarships, schools attendance rewards, and the like. This could be done to assess impact or lack of it. Issues ranging from logistics management, corruption and leakage, to perception of the community, etc. need to be reviewed. Fine-tuning the incentive structure has been long overdue.

It is important to acknowledge that political sensitivities and administrative apathy may have prevented such a thorough exercise. However, given that the incentive system has been in place for almost five decades, a thorough review could be justified.

B. Rekindle the debate on ways and means of reaching the unreached. Provision of alternative forms of education, simultaneous provision of formal school with flexible non-formal schools, schools run by women volunteers in remote areas and in resistant pockets, quality regulation through government recognition of private initiatives, etc. All the studies have highlighted that existing school facilities are inadequate if all children were to enrol.

Bridging the gap between expected demand and supply of good quality schools is an acutely essential need. Such a debate could enable us to re-open the old one on moving from a linear view of levels of educational facilities to a collateral approach enabling students, and those who wish to move out of the formal stream after the primary stage, to pursue an education that is suited to their needs.

C. Revisit the debate on the provision of female teachers, especially in rural areas, as role models that the community can emulate. To prepare a time-bound strategy to enhance the pool of female teachers has been acknowledged as a priority. Experiences of large non-formal education programmes in the NGO sector (BRAC, Bangladesh) have shown that a systematic mapping exercise followed by intensive training and support can turn the tide.

Alternatively, identification of local youth (boys or girls) to work as teachers in the village or hamlet they come from (the Shiksha Karmi Project in India) has been recognized as an effective strategy to provide a highly motivated teaching force to remote areas. It is scarcely necessary to add that such a debate would need to address systemic problems of absenteeism, working environment, support structure, lowering qualifications for entry, and the rest.

D. Review financial management with a view to moving towards greater efficiency, plug leakages, and identify reasons (at all levels) for low utilization of aid in the education sector. The absorption capacity of the system hinges on the capacity of personnel, their ability to take decisions, and their accountability both to the community and their own superiors. Such a review could lead to innovative and appropriate financial management systems.[8]

2. Review the potential and limitations of establishing separate women´s cells, women´s focal points, and gender consultants in mainstream programmes and institutions

Since the mid-seventies, governments, NGOs and international organizations felt the need to establish separate special cells for women´s education, and to this end provided focal points and appointed gender consultants. The initial argument in favour of such units, cells, or focal points was that it provided space for visible activity with clearly demarcated responsibility, funds, and

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[8] This is of particular importance in the South Asian region where the systems set in motion by the British are still being followed. General financial reforms may be difficult, but programme-specific financial reforms could become a trailblazer.

the opportunity to explore alternative strategies. Many advocates of this strategy argued that special encouragement was necessary to correct centuries of discrimination.

This strategy gave tremendous visibility to gender issues in educational access, encouraged innovations, and gave us the space to experiment. A wealth of gender-related studies were undertaken, and our own understanding of sexual discrimination improved.

Looking back over the past twenty years many commentators observed that such cells/focal points were invariably marginalized within the system or programme, and were often sidelined (especially if the person was not a career civil servant and a junior in the hierarchy). In many cases such units and cells were never accepted as being an integral part of the system, leading to ad hoc appointments and low status within the organizations. At the same time, such units and cells were expected to be responsible for "girls and women". Having little power to influence the mainstream, it is not surprising that they had little impact - except as a token to satisfy the gender checklist of donors, women´s organizations, and organized lobbies.

This realization led to a demand to integrate gender issues into the mainstream and address systemic issues of access, relevance, and quality. Development practitioners in the region (within the government and outside) gradually realized that "mainstreaming" the issues of special focus groups and women is not easy.

Bureaucracies work under a lot of pressure and are therefore not able to easily adapt to radical changes. Making a system move and adapt itself to changing needs demands political will. There have been instances in other parts of the world where universal elementary education was made a non-negotiable political agenda. People working in all walks of life responded.

Today, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, etc. have been able to break out of the cycle of illiteracy and the irrelevance of education as it is delivered to the vast majority of the poor, especially women. All these countries recognized that they could not reach the goal of universal elementary education unless they closed the gender gap.

They perceived women as being an integral part of the productive labour force, making a valuable contribution to national development. Women ceased to be invisible in the economy. That realization was the turning point. While they retained special cells, units, and focal points for women´s education, their role was transformed and they became an integral part of educational administration.

3. Intensive advocacy with social, economical, and political élite and opinion-makers to put girls´ and women´s education on the national agenda

As it is evident from the above sections, unless there is a change in the mind set of the power élite in the region and unless we stop viewing women as recipients of welfare, perpetrators of the population problem, and as a mass of ignorant "housewives" and "mothers" contributing little else to the evolution of our society and culture, we cannot make a breakthrough. This change

can be brought about by intensive media campaigns targeted at the political élite and opinion-makers. Evidence across the region shows that where good quality and relevant education are available, parents are more that willing to send their children, including girls, to school.

Over the past fifty years this region had been witness to intensive advocacy by the government on various social and political issue. For example, the population issue has been a major concern. India, for example, mounted a sustained campaign lasting over forty years to drive home the need to adopt the small family norm. Similarly, many sensitive social and political issues (national, intra-regional, and international) have been subjects of the sustained campaign to mould public option. Unfortunately, the same political determination has not been visible in the area of education, and even less when it comes to girls´ and women´s education. Bringing about a change in political priorities in favour of education for all and enhancing girls´ and women´s access to education demands sustained advocacy. As this is technically a constitutional mandate, strong determination on the part of senior civil servants, eminent personalities, and a supportive media can turn the tide.

Concluding remarks

Ultimately, all discussions on education and the gaping schism between stated goals and the ground realities lead to political will. The best recommendations and most effective strategies will be rendered ineffective unless there is a radical change in the priorities. What the region needs is
strong will to make basic education for all a priority and resolve to bridge the gender gap. I need scarcely add that this will not be possible without enhanced allocation of resources for basic education in general and women´s education in particular.

ENGENDERING AFRICAN EDUCATION: SOME REFLECTIONS

Essi Sutherland-Addy

Today I am representing the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) because for seven years I was deputy minister for higher education of the Republic of Ghana. The forum is a group of women ministers, deputy ministers, vice- chancellors and policy-makers in Africa, who have come together to reinforce and to support each other, in order to make things happen in education of girls. Our idea is that if we have been able to get to this high level policy making position, we must use the position to make sure that every girl and woman in Africa goes to school. We have been in existence for three years now and I am very proud to say that the FAWE is highly recognized around the world for our advocacy for girls' and women's education.

Our work is based on 18 national chapters around the continent, where each woman member of the forum must make sure that something is happening in her country to help girls and women to get into school. We also have decided that our work will be based on solid research and gender issues, particularly in the area of education, so that it will form the basis for targeted action, because a lot of people say: "Well, where is the evidence? Where is the analysis?" A lot of our work, therefore, revolves around promoting research on women's issues and issues of girls' education.

We also know that we have to create an alternative paradigm to look at education for African girls and women, and the only way to do so is to do that ourselves. So our research is utilized for that purpose. Our concern with engendering education has grown out of a feeling that we have to consolidate the data and also consolidate the powerful and experiential qualitative evidence, to make sure that people are aware that gender blindness is totally unacceptable in the educational system.

In our paper, what we try to do is to explore the concepts, such as empowerment, development, education and gender and then link these together in a dialectal relationship. We think that there has to be the right relationship between education and gender in order to attain development. This is one of the main theses of our paper. In addition, the paper does a number of things. First of all it shares the realities of African education, especially as they pertain to girls and women. On the basis of this reality, we underscore the importance of engendered education policy and practice, as a development in human rights imperative and other issues for social justice. While FAWE has a holistic view of education within the framework of EFA (Education for All), it has concentrated on getting the girl child into formal

education, as well as making formal education receptive to the girl child.

Empowerment is a continuum which goes from power to extreme powerlessness and the adult uneducated African woman could be situated at the far end of extreme powerlessness. I must hasten to add that we are not trying to present a monolithic Africa. I was very happy that my colleague from India made the point that there is such a wide diversity.

Part of the discussion also looks at the crisis that befalls quite a number of our women. Africa is always portrayed as a disaster zone, but it is important to note that over the last forty or fifty years, Africa has had perhaps the most phenomenal growth in educational enrolments anywhere in the world. Yet there are really sad statistics. Forty million 6-11 year old are out of school in Africa and of these, 54% are girls. In sub-Saharan Africa the illiteracy rate among the women is the highest in the world. In the whole continent, 54% of illiterates are women. The gender differential in school enrollment stands at a gaping 20% and we note that it is indeed a very sad situation since, despite EFA, we have still not been able to come anywhere close to bridging the gender gap in education.

Now we have tried to look at what is happening, because most African governments are spending tremendous amounts of their budget on education. For example in Ghana, 40% of the national budget is spent on education. I do not think that can be surpassed, but when the cake is small, a fraction of the cake is also small.

Let us look at some of the problems or reasons why we think we have this gender problem in education, or lack of gender sensitivity. First of all, a link has to be made between the laws and rules outside the educational system. Sometimes we have a one-eyed approach, where we only look within the educational system to find the problems that affect women and girls, and we think if we gave them some schools, or if we gave them a literacy programme, or if they could read and write, then everything would be all right. But the point is that what is happening to the woman, her multiple roles, the things that a girl has to do before she goes to school, all those things are just as important as providing her with a classroom.

You have to be able to solve those problems outside the classroom, in order to get her into the classroom. Customary laws and the burdens that women and girls have to handle, affect what happens with the educational system and with women. Educational policies could also in fact be disempowering. The other thing is the quality of education where questions of curriculum, text books, the teaching/learning process and teacher management programmes have to be raised. All these have an effect on the participation of girls and the engendering of education.

I would also like to mention the issue of external factors. One of these is the question of whether or not a girl can indeed undertake lifelong education or lifelong learning. There are so many factors that discourage the African girl and woman from continuing her education. For example, societal attitudes and the women's and girls' perception of themselves, and why they do not need education. I mean, if you are going to get married and you are going into the kitchen,

why do you need to be educated? If you get educated, then you go to the medical school, you will never get a husband, and so on. And those pressures stop women from going on any further.

Another big problem is the question of pregnancy and the fear of pregnancy. So that drop-outs begin as soon as girls attain the age where parents are afraid that they are going to get pregnant. They then say "Look, let me just marry you off!" Or you find a situation where girls do indeed get pregnant, and then there is the question of how to re-enter the system, and the system in most countries is completely closed to the girl who has had a child. And yet, of course, the boy who had the child continues his education, and the man who had the child, nothing happens to him at all. So pregnancy
for us is a major issue.

We also want to emphasize the question of the education of the disabled girls within the context of educational policy. We do not have policies dealing with the disabled girl. If the girl child has a problem with going to school, how much more the disabled girl. There is a lot of factors which discourage the disabled girl. Nobody is paying attention to her and she is marginalised.

Financing policies on education could also be contradictory. We want to sustain our educational system. So we say "Okay, everybody has to pay 1 cent, or 5 cents, or 10 cents for their pencil". It's a good idea, but then as soon as you have to pay, the boy gets his 10 cents to go to school and the girl does not. So you find a situation where boys are favoured when the family makes choices in its financing of education.

With respect to the quality of education, one area where policy affects women most is adult education. It is also a very sad situation. Adult education has part-time teachers. It is done in a haphazard manner. There is very little financing for adult education. As it is equated to literacy education, it is moved out from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Communities or some units, downstairs under the basement. You have a situation where adult education which addresses or should address the needs of women is not being given very much attention, even though in policy documents you find a lot written about it.

A related issue is that of continuing education for women and girls because at the moment, once they are finished with the training for skills enhancement for people in formal employment, women get stocked in stereotype positions.

On the area of curriculum, the question of the concept of self-fulfilling negativity has to be addressed. We have heard the previous presentation where workers are told that they cannot perform and they indeed do not perform.

Let me quickly go then to the question of what we do, because there is no point in continuously complaining. This is where we really believe in the question of advocacy. First of all, policy-makers and implementers need the first level of gender sensitivity, because they are the people who will make things happen or keep them from happening. So in order to provide empowering education to women and girls, it is important to sensitize the people who make the decisions. After sensitizing, skills training should follow. Our job is to find a subtle way to get

into the system. We have also made every male minister of Education an associate member so they could not run away from the facts.

The next step is to sensitize teacher and teacher training colleges, then to look into the curriculum, and then textbooks production. Our textbooks often portray women as helpless and all the positive images are of boys and men.

There must also be a courageous leap into actually taking affirmative action. We are not ashamed of affirmative action. For example, in order for the disabled girl and woman to make it, there has to be special affirmative action in her favour, and we are not abashed about it. The same is true with higher education. In order to put women into higher education, you have to promote affirmative action. We are also very much proud of women who are in a position to take advantage of the highest possible high-tech and high-management training and they must also be visible there.

It has to be emphasized that governments have to bear more responsibility for the continuing education of women, post-basic education, as well as higher education. It is a tragedy that many women end their involvement in formal education at even the basic level, at primary school.

Given all these, we are faced with a great task and if we look at the question of development and the imperatives of development, we do not have any choice but to look after and to work for women's education.

Now to share something from Ghana. Many of you have seen pictures of the termite mound that stands up from the ground, almost as high as a human being. And the termites have built a very complex city within this mound. The key to that mound is the queen termite and in Ghana we say when the queen termite dies, the termite city dies too. I hope we will all remember that.

ENGENDERING AFRICAN EDUCATION: A CONCEPT PAPER

Sheila Parvyn Wamahiu

The issue of main streaming gender into the development process has remained as fashionable as it has been elusive in recent times. Viewed largely as donor-driven, the following factors: lack of political will, lack of perceived relevance to the African situation, lack of adequate understanding of the process, lack of ability to translate theory into practice, lack of skills for main streaming, or a combination of the above, have frustrated effective gender main streaming in the development process.

That is not to say that efforts have not been made, or there are no success stories; on the whole, however, African development has tended to remain gender blind, if not outright gender discriminatory.

Though policy-makers and implementers may not always realize it, gender blindness is a dangerous state to be in. It has frustrated the recognition, development and mobili- zation of the full creativity of all the people of Africa. It has effectively excluded women from decision-making at both formal and informal levels, and turned a numerical majority into a powerless minority. It is not surprising then, that as we move towards the twenty-first century, Africa as a continent remains underdeveloped, dependent on external aid (often with strong strings attached), traumatized and often in violent conflict.

We should and must change the situation if we have our good and that of the future generations of Africans at heart. Self-reliance, sustainability, escape from poverty, hunger and crippling external debts, will depend on the full involvement of women and men, boys and girls in the development process. This includes not only their equal contribution, but also ensuring that they reap equal benefits from it. In other words, development in Africa should be ***engendered.*** The need now, when Africa is in transition from monolithic governance to multiparty democracies, is more urgent than ever.

In this paper, the importance of engendering African education is underscored. It is argued that engendering educational policies and practices is a development imperative, as well as a human rights issue and issue of social justice; it is not just a passing fancy or fad as is commonly perceived.

Empowering Education as Key to Engendered Development

There is a common fallacy that education --- formal and literacy education --- is the panacea for all, or at least most, ills that confront individuals and society. It is linked to employment, upward social mobility, improved quality of living and so on. Female education in particular is believed to bring about the following benefits: (a) reduction in infant mortality and morbidity through improvements in children's health and

nutritional level emanating from earlier and more effective diagnosis and management of illness; (b) increased economic resources available to the household; (c) improvement in the non-market and market productivity of the mother; (d) greater willingness by women to invest in all children, especially in girls; (e) reduction in family size by delaying marriage, lowering fertility rates, increasing the practice of contraceptive use, and opting to have fewer children; (f) decrease in maternal mortality rates; (g) large increase in wage earnings for themselves and their families; and (h) promotion of children's schooling, especially that of girls.

Though research from various parts of the world largely substantiates the above claims, it is important to note that the level of benefit derived from education would be related to the degree to which it is empowering. For example, in Swaziland, despite high female literacy rates, maternal mortality is relatively high. From this, it can be assumed that the basic education in Swaziland is probably not empowering enough to make a difference!

So what is empowering education? *First of all*, it is important to realize that education is a broad concept that encompasses the formal, non-formal and informal and goes far beyond schooling.

Empowering education, whether in the formal, informal or non-formal context, is one that "liberates all humankind and empowers both genders through teaching them how to advance their own development by internalizing the values of self-respect, social responsibility, tolerance, justice and freedom" (Wamahiu and Chege, 1996:1).

An empowering education is one which promotes equality, peace and development. It promotes creativity, self-sufficiency and sustainability. It is relevant and adaptable. It is transformative by nature and ***engendering.***

The opposite of empowering education is education for oppression. This promotes "an undemocratic culture characterized by intolerance, prejudices, child abuse, authoritarianism and sexism" (Ibid). It indoctrinates, stifles creativity, promotes divisiveness and conflict, and is, in fact, endangering.

Secondly, it is a holistic and multidimensional concept. It considers the total person or situation, taking into account the cognitive, physical, psychological, social, political and economic dimensions. It involves the ability to analyze one's own situation from various dimensions and organize and mobilize for individual and social change.

Thirdly, empowerment deals with strategic, long-term rather than with the short-term, superficial needs of individuals or groups.

Fourthly, empowerment is not an absolute, close ended concept. It is a process that is dynamic and can be located along a continuum ranging from a state of "total powerlessness" to "total powerfulness" with the extremities being "ideals" (Lazo, 1995)

Fifthly, the concept of empowering education also touches upon the issue of quality. A low quality education would not be empowering; it would instead tend to be oppressive. Quality here is assessed not solely in terms of quantitative indicators such as the possession of physical facilities, access to learning resources, teacher qualification

and teacher-pupil ratio, as has been the common tendency.

The total classroom/school culture needs to be taken into consideration in evaluating the quality of formal and non-formal education. A classroom culture that is authoritarian and unimaginative is not empowering; empowering classroom culture should be democratizing, participatory creative and foster critical thinking.

The Crisis in African Education

To what extent is African education empowering? The answer is not so simple given the wide diversity of education systems, types and levels within not only the continent, but within sub-regions, countries and socio-economic strata. If we use the empowerment continuum as a yardstick for measurement, however, we shall find that the majority of educational institutions (formal or non-formal, regardless of level) would tend to cluster around the "total powerlessness"-extremity. Obanya (1996) situates the majority of adult literates in Africa along this extremity. According to him, a small fraction of adult learners actually become functionally literate, and therefore ready for a state of "total powerfulness".

Wamahiu (I 996b:3) in relation to primary schooling, likewise notes that:

> "The classroom culture (...) is typically distinguished by authoritarian teaching styles: monologuing, talk-and-chalk method, rote memorizations and repetitious learning, and frequent use of corporal punishments. Under such circumstances, the learning environment is poor and disempowering not only for girls, but for all children.

This crisis in African education has been precipitated by government (and donor) policies that emphasized quantity at the expense of quality. During the first couple of decades after independence, there was rapid numerical expansion of the education system in partnership with communities, community-based organizations (CBO), non-governmental organizations (NGO) and religious bodies. There were rapidly increasing enrollments in many of the countries. Kenya is a good example. However, this rapid expansion divorced from qualitative improvements has contributed, among other factors, to overcrowding, scarcity of books, unqualified teachers and so on within the education system itself. In the long run, the expansion has not only proven to be unsustainable, but has contributed to a host of problems such as unemployment, increasing crime rates, intolerance, violence, and poverty that characterize the wider society.

The non-sustainability of African education systems was brought to the fore most shockingly through the revelations made in Amman during the Education for All (EFA) Mid-Decade Review in 1996. Education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a whole, it was revealed, was suffering from serious problems including the following:

• A majority of the countries were still very far removed from achieving the EFA goals agreed upon in 1990 in Jomtien. These include countries that are emerging from situations of conflict or gross economic destabilization like Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Somalia

(UNICEF, 1996). Other countries with relatively low school enrollments are Mali (24%), Niger (29%) and Guinea (37%) (ICFEFA, 1996).

• Even countries which had achieved relatively high gross enrollment ratios (GER) are now experiencing declining enrollment. Examples are Kenya and Tanzania. In Kenya, the GER dropped by 16 percentile points from 95% in the 1980s to 79% by 1995 (Wamahiu: 1997c). In Tanzania, there was a drop of 33% in GER between 1980 and 1993 (Hyde: 1996).

• Wastage is very high in almost every country. Wastage takes the form of high dropout rate at all levels of education, repetitions and absenteeism. In Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe repetition and drop-outs are the main causes of less than 100% net enrollment ratio (NER) (UNICEF, 1997).

• In many of the countries, the numbers of illiterates and semi-literates are growing. They comprise both those who have never been to school as well as those who have relapsed into illiteracy after dropping out of school (or adult education centres). A number of countries have literacy rates as low as 30 to 50% (Angola, Benin, Burundi, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Chad) and below 30 % (Burkina Faso, Niger and Somalia) (ICFEFA, 1996).

Particularly worrying was the conclusion made that progress in female education in SSA has been "excruciatingly slow" since Jomtien despite "the urgent need to close the gender gap in education both as a matter of simple equity and as the most effective means of responding to demographic pressure and promoting development".

Two disturbing trends need to be noted here. In some countries where there has been declining enrollments, the decrease had occurred for girls but not for boys. Zimbabwe is a case in point. Second, the countries that had a gender gap in favour of girls have narrowed that gap, while most of the countries in which boys were favoured have experienced a widening of the gender gap in enrollments (Hyde, 1996).

The Quality of Education and the Gender Gap

The gender gap in access to quality education is also rather glaring. A major concern is that adult literacy programmes and non-formal education initiatives which cater a large proportion of out-of-school people, most of whom are women and girls, continue to operate outside the mainstream education system. Adult education (read literacy), for example, is perceived to be inferior to school education and relegated to low budget, poorly resourced, less prestigious ministries such as social welfare and/or community development.

But even within the mainstream education system, explicit and implicit gender biases can be observed. Gender discrimination is evident in the following:

© existing educational policies including funding policies;
✗ the curriculum including text-books and other supportive learning resources
• the teaching-learning process

- teacher management and support programs
- legal and regulatory frameworks outside the education sector having implications for education

To understand the extent and depth of these biases one needs to evaluate individually each component of educational policy and practice in African countries, as well as assess the education systems holistically from a gender perspective. Some examples of gender discrimination and bias in African education are highlighted below:

a) Educational Policies

Though not girl-focused, experience in various countries show that free and compulsory education policies go a long way in reducing gender gaps. In Kenya, for example, though education has never been compulsory, a free education policy implemented in phases between 1974 and 1979 helped to increase enrollments and reduce gender disparities at the primary level. With the current cost-sharing policy within a context of increasing economic hardship, there has been a notable decrease in enrollments for both genders as we have seen already. In times of economic hardship, research indicates that girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school or not enrolled at all.

There are other less obvious consequences of cost-sharing practices for girls in poor families. Available resources, like text-books, may be channeled towards the boy-child rather than towards his sister; girls may be the ones to sit on the floor instead of on chairs; girls may be sent away from school more often for failure to meet the financial demands of education. Under such circumstances, the quality (and quantity) of girls' learning is bound to be affected.

There are also indications that cost-sharing and demands made on pupils by the school may also be having adverse impacts on the education of adults, especially women who may decide to opt out of literacy/post-literacy classes, or use limited resources to buy learning materials for their children rather than for themselves (M. Ngau, personal communication, 1997).

A second policy, that of re-entry, is of direct significance to the persistence of girls in school. Currently, the policy in many African countries is to exclude pregnant girls from the education system, without providing them with any alternative venue to continue with their education. The policy may take one of the following forms:

- The schooling of girls who get pregnant pre-maritally is immediately terminated;
- The schooling of pregnant girls who are either married or unmarried is terminated;
- The schooling of pregnant girls is terminated temporarily. The pregnant girls are allowed to deliver and seek re-admission preferably to a different school after a specified period (usually one year).

The above policy, in whatever form, is gender discriminatory in several respects. *First*, it violates the right of girls to acquiring education. *Second*, the policies are usually silent on the "punishment" to be meted out to the girls' sexual partner. Sometimes, some sort of disciplinary action is specified for the culprit if they happen to be school boys. However, men in the community escape any reprimand under the pretense that it is not possible to identify them conclusively! *Third*,

the policy discriminates against girls who miscarry and would consequently want to return to school early. *Fourth*, girls, even when allowed re-entry, lose out on valuable learning-time by being compelled to stay away from school for a certain period of time. Boys suffer no such disruption to their studies. *Fifth*, there are no child-care facility where the adolescent mother can leave her baby while she continues with her schooling. Usually the only option available for the adolescent girl is to leave the baby with her own already overburdened mother. *Sixth*, because of the stigmatization of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers by peers and teachers, they may not actually take advantage of the provision allowing them back to school, or they may conceal the fact of their pregnancy/child from everybody else. *Seventh*, because it is only the girls whose pregnancy is discovered who suffer expulsion and stigmatization, many pregnant girls actually attempt backdoor, dangerous, often life threatening abortions. Those who succeed in their attempt without any complications arising, manage to continue with schooling without any major disruption.

There are very few out-of-school initiatives to cater for the needs of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers in Africa. As we have already pointed out, only a few countries like Botswana and Kenya allow re-entry.

Most of the others opt for expulsion. The State does not provide alternative venues for continuing education for this category, leaving provision to non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and religious groups. Sometimes, the alternatives are commercial enterprises of doubtful quality; young girls with no source of income, and the burden of looking after a baby, may find it difficult to raise enough funds to pay for continuing education and/or training. Many of them may actually end up as domestic workers with precarious conditions of service and subject to economic, physical and sexual abuse.

There is no explicit policy regarding the basic and continuing education of the disabled. Special schools are few and far between, while the integration of people with disabilities into the education mainstream is more theoretical than real. Combined with negative community attitudes towards them, the disabled are persistently marginalized with the female person with disability being doubly disadvantaged. This lack of policy constitutes a violation of the right of the disabled to education guaranteed in innumerable international conventions and declarations.

b) The Curriculum and Text-Books

Research conducted in different parts of Africa over the last decade or so demonstrate the gender insensitivity of the curriculum and text-books (Wamahiu, 1994; Nyati-Ramahobo and Mmolai, 1992; Obura, 1991; MOE, Ethiopia, 1989; Tembo, 1984). Gender bias manifests itself both in the written word and textbook illustrations, deriving both from the official and hidden curricula. Here, we shall focus on the issue of textbooks.

As Wamahiu (1994) observes, the gender analysis of textbooks in countries as varied as Zambia, Kenya, Botswana and Ethiopia reveal certain commonalties. Women and girls in the African textbooks are marginalized and devalued. Quantitative analysis reveal that they are mentioned fewer

times than men and boys. When they are mentioned, they are portrayed as passive, dependent, weak, fragile and even mindless, engaged only in non-remunerative or poorly paid, less prestigious occupations. Women and girls are particularly absent from science, mathematics, technology and agriculture textbooks. This leads to a falsification of reality and is a reflection of the ideological (patriarchal) perspective of the textbook writers.

There are also the issues of gender insensitive assessment methods, gender inappropriate physical facilities and gender bias in the allocation of resources, including science equipment in girls' schools.

c) The Teaching-Learning Process

The teaching-learning process is also characterized by conscious and subconscious gender bias. Research indicates that teachers' expectations of pupils are gender differentiated, and that boys are perceived to be academically better than girls. Teachers' expectations also tend to be subject-typed; boys are assumed to be better at science and mathematics, and girls in home economics. Through the process of socialization, reinforced through a system of reward and punishment, students internalize and act out the teachers'expectations regarding subject proficiency. Appleton (1993), investigating gender differences in educational attainment in Kenya came to the conclusion that "girls under perform in schools where staff think that they are naturally less able".

Biraimah's (1982) observations made in reference to Togo, sums up the teachers' role in "transmitting both negative and limited perceptions of their female students' abilities and potentials" through allowing girls "marginal academic participation, negative reinforcement, and the constant association with menial duties."

Or " They (boys) work harder. The girls don't really want to be here. Why should I waste my time with them? I have better things to do than try to teach someone who doesn't really want to be in school. If they don't work hard they should just leave and go to the fields or get married because that's where they'll end up"(Prouty, 1991:124).

With regards to the expectations of Malawian teachers, according to Davision and Kanyuka (as quoted in Odaga and Heneveld, 1995) eighty percent believed that girls are better behaved than boys while ninety per cent were of the opinion that boys were better academically than girls. Most of the reasons given to explain why boys are academically superior to girls were negative responses about the girls rather than positive characteristics about the boys. They include girls' lack of ambition, loose morals and early pregnancies.

d) Teacher Management and Support Programmes

The teacher is the single most important resource in a classroom, whether in formal schools, non-formal centres, or adult literacy classes. It is therefore extremely vital that the working conditions of the teacher are supported and designed to promote commitment and boost morale. Unfortunately, although the biggest chunk of Ministry of Education budgets in most countries is allocated to teachers' salary, teachers continue to be inadequately remunerated for their services. The situation

of the adult education teachers, many of whom may be on part-time terms, is even worse.

From a gender perspective, one can observe several trends. Women are generally absent from top policy and decision-making positions in education. Within school management system, the absence of women is again pronounced despite teaching, especially at the lower levels being perceived as a "feminine" profession. In Kenya, for example, only 7% of the primary school head teachers are women.

The management of adult education is again in the hands of men. To take a Kenyan example again, women officers in the Directorate are approximately 25%; in the field, only 2 of the 8 (or 25%) of the Provincial Education Officers are female despite the fact that adult education (literacy) in Kenya, as in many other countries of the world, caters mainly women learners.

Legislation relating to pregnancy and pregnancy leave are not women-sensitive. In Lesotho, for example, where education is largely under the management of religious bodies, single women-teachers who get pregnant are summarily dismissed from service. The maternity leave granted to teachers is often less than three months; pregnant teachers end up forfeiting their annual leave for the year. Some countries tailor maternity leave conditional to the number of children one has!

Current policy and practice of taking leave to care for sick children contribute to the stereotyping of women as unreliable, tardy and not fit to assume leadership position. In some countries, married women are not eligible for housing allowance, especially if their husband is also in the civil service.

In terms of training, employment and career development of teachers, female trainees tend to be marginalized especially in higher level training institutions.Women's opportunities for promotion are curtailed, often through unofficial practices. Like in schools, the curriculum and the teaching-learning processes are also gender biased.

Sexual harassment further obstructs female participation in education at all levels. Even when rules and regulations exist offering redress to the victims, their implementation is often wanting.

e) Laws and Rules Outside Education

The wider legal and regulatory context within which education exists may actually reinforce gender discriminatory practices within it. The participation of girls and women in education may be restricted by customary as well as civil laws relating to marriage, bride price payment, women's status, ownership and inheritance laws, child labour, and widow inheritance, among others. In a large majority of cases, women and girls may not even be aware of their rights and redresses open to them even within the existing legal frameworks.

Recommendations

"The goal of a mainstreaming strategy is gender equality. Mainstreaming is a process or strategy to work towards the goal of gender equality. It is not an end in itself. Mainstreaming implies more than just ensuring equal numbers of women and men in current initiatives or structures. It involves changing policies and

institutions so that they actively promote gender equality"

Schalkwyk, Thomas & Woroniuk (1996)

We began this paper with a brief critique of the failure by African governments to mainstream gender into the development process. The failure to do so within education is particularly worrisome given the transformative potential of education that is empowering. However, as we have seen, in the vast majority of cases, African education - formal, non-formal and informal - cluster on the "powerlessness" extremity of an empowerment continuum.

An integral component of an empowering education is that it is engendered. However, gender biases persist at all levels and in all forms of education in Africa. The biases are both quantitative and qualitative in nature and will require more than just good intentions and cosmetic surgery to incise out. It is within this context that the following recommendations are made to ensure that gender is actually mainstreamed into African education.

1. Bringing Adult Literacy into the Mainstream

A significant proportion of women in Africa are illiterates, never having enrolled into schools or had access to literacy education. Others relapse into illiteracy having dropped out of school prematurely, or remain semi-literate. Many never have access to any sort of education thereafter.

Many hesitate to join adult education (literacy and post-literacy) classes because of its perceived lower status, reinforced by its exclusion from the mainstream of government support for the education sector.

It is therefore crucial that the status of adult literacy be raised by bringing it into the mainstream of educational development.

2. Diversification of Basic Education

Like adult education programmes, non-formal education also suffer from lower status. While some CBOs, NGOs and religious communities are undoubtedly doing commendable job in providing continuing education and training to school-girl drop-outs, there is a need for greater coordination and supervision, and in bringing about changes in the perceived value attitude toward non-formal education. The governments must bear greater responsibility toward the out-of-school girl and women by providing them with recognized and approved channels of continued education and training.

3. Continuing Education for Women and Girls

Even for girls and women who complete their courses, and exit from the system at specific levels, there are fewer opportunities to continue with learning due to their multiple role burdens which leave them with very little time for personal improvement; and no or hardly any provision by employers for on-the-job-training and skills enhancement for those who are in formal employment. This of course affects the upward career mobility of women.

At the same time, the issue of higher education and specialized training for females must be given priority. Currently, a

very small percentage of the student population at the tertiary level is female in almost all countries (the exceptions are very few). If we are serious about mainstreaming gender into African education (and other development sectors), we should take positive action to ensure that there is a critical mass of women in policy and decision-making positions by providing opportunities for them to continue with post-secondary education.

4. Gender Awareness Campaigns

There is an urgent need for gender awareness campaigns that involve various stakeholders in education, including communities, CBOs, NGOs and religious bodies. These campaigns should go beyond emphasizing why girls should go to school to assisting the target groups to critically analyse the rationale for customary practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, bride price payment and other barriers to effective female participation in education. This analysis should be able to facilitate the movement from understanding to action; all too often awareness campaigns while strong in providing information, do little to bring about meaningful changes in attitudes and practices. The case of AIDs awareness campaign in Kenya is a case in point. According to sources, although 80% of the Kenyan population is aware of the HIV/AIDS, this awareness has not translated into changes in lifestyles or sexual practices. In other words, we are here advocating gender awareness campaigns that are empowering.

5. Gender Sensitization and Skills Training for Educationists and Other Key Target Groups

Gender sensitization of key educational policy-makers and other personnel involved in implementation is vital. Already FAWE, together with other development partners, is involved in this process. However, it needs to be noted that gender sensitization, like literacy, needs to be reinforced and tied to the everyday experiences of the learners if empowerment is to take place. Gender sensitization should be followed by training in gender analysis and when relevant, skills in gender sensitive research, both quantitative and qualitative, should be imparted Gender analysis and research will provide not only useful information on gender gaps and discrimination, but also provide materials for consultation with women as a spring board for bringing about participatory changes.

6. Targeting Teacher Training Institutions and Programmes

A priority group for gender sensitization and training should be teachers through in-service and pre-service programmes. It is important that this should be institutionalized, and gender integrated into the programmes so that gender sensitization and training does not appear to be imposed from the outside or burdensome in what may already be a burdensome curriculum.

The rationale for prioritizing teacher-training is obvious. We have already cited research in different parts of Africa that show the reproduction of gender discriminatory attitudes and practices in the classroom. Given the influence of teachers on learners, irrespective of age, gender sensitive teaching would go a long way to creating enabling learning environments

for the females and other disadvantaged groups, and help to bring about gender responsive changes in society.

7. Reviewing the Curriculum and Learning Resources

> "Stereotyping shall be eliminated through the revision of textbooks and school programmes and adaptation of teaching methods".
>
> CEDAW, 1985

Targeting teacher training programmes and institutions of course include reviewing their curricula and learning materials for gender responsiveness. The development of gender sensitive modules for the teacher trainers should be given top priority as a short term measure.

However, there is a need also, as a long term and consistent measure, to analyse and revise the educational curricula and books used at the various levels and forms of education. The inclusion of female role models involved in a wide variety of fields - both traditional and non-traditional - should be ensured.

8. Taking Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is not inconsistent with the goals of gender main streaming. When gender analysis reveals that not only is the playing field is unequal, but there are deep-rooted structural barriers to women's upward mobility and autonomy, a case for affirmative action should be made. The example of female participation in science and technology is a case in point.

> "Promote an educational setting that eliminates all barriers that impede the schooling of married and/or for pregnant girls and young mothers, including, as appropriate, affordable and physically accessible child-care facilities and parental education to encourage those who have responsibilities for the care of their children and siblings during their school years to return to, or continue with, and complete schooling."
>
> Beijing Platform for Action 1995

There is also a case for affirmative action to cater to women's special needs. For example, demands for appropriate length of paid maternity leave should not be considered discrimination against men. Similarly, special action in favour of the disabled girls and women, including free education at all levels and provision of disability-friendly and gender-sensitive facilities should be undertaken by governments.

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ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL SUBORDINATION IN OUR EDUCATION WORK

Lean Chan Heng

My presentation of my experiences with women workers in the Free Trade Zones (FTZ) is divided into three parts. I would like to first locate myself and my work and then talk a bit about the situation of the women. I will then proceed to talk about the kind of women workers' education and some of the neglected dimensions which have to be addressed. One of these neglected aspects is the personal experience and therefore, I will finally focus on the concept of subjectivity.

This morning I am talking to you as a popular educator and not as somebody coming from the university where I teach to earn my living. The latter allows me to do the work of my heart which I am sharing with you this morning. I am talking to you as a popular educator who is involved in participatory research, and that is how I have reviewed the kind of educational work that we have been involved in. In the past, women workers' education focused largely on the objective material situation, namely the employment conditions and their rights as workers. Hence, consciousness raising and exploitation, and the importance of workers' unity are the usual agendas.

Women's subjectivities and their personally lived experiences, are rarely taken on board. Even in situations where gender agendas are covered, their unspoken thoughts, the repressed feelings and pain, especially the personally felt emotional subordination tend to be overlooked. Male dominated organization practices and pedagogical methodologies tend to deny women workers the space and authority to talk about their own experiences, especially their gender experiences. The women are often silenced or made to feel more inadequate, with both internalized stereotypes and the experience of subjugation, reinforced through the kind of educational work that they undergo. Although lots of educational programmes emphasize the importance of participation, they ignore the practical obstacles and internalized inferiority that make participation very difficult, if not impossible. The whole personhood, their physical and emotional being is very much overlooked. It is talked about as a subject of concern, but not taken on board in the educational processes.

Today, I would like to stress that in educational work with women workers, it is

vital to address the repressed silenced experiences of emotional subordination. The powerlessness, the feelings of inferiority, all these have to be taken on in educational work, especially in the case of women workers who I will be talking about. The kind of subjugation that they encounter in all levels of society, definitely as you know from the workplace, from society in general, from the home, from the very intimate love partners, and also from their family, and from their own workmates, both, men and women.

Now I have come round to recognize the importance of the centrality of recognizing and taking on board the emotional well-being of the people that we work with. Very often we have political objectives, we have educational objectives. We forget the person as a person, especially the emotional aspects of it. I have now started to revise and to reposition feelings and emotions in educational work, and how that should be addressed as a critical agenda in our educational work. Specifically I focus on exploring how interactive and reflective talking can lead to an experience of relief. I am increasingly convinced that it is necessary to include experienced emotional subjectivities in our educational agenda.

To contextualize my proposals, I would like to talk a little about the situation of women workers. I started being involved in educational organizing work with women workers some 25 years ago like many other young, concerned, committed activists, I was very concerned about the exploitation, especially women workers who work in free-trade zones. I think most of us are quite familiar that towards the end of the seventies, big multinational corporations from Japan, from the United States and a couple of European countries came to invest in several South-East Asia countries. Factories in FTZs or special industrial zones were set up, with special tax incentives and a whole range of tax reductions. To attract investors, workers were promoted as very disciplined and docile.

As we know, most of the women workers, like any other global assembly line operators, work in tedious, repetitive, menial tasks, as non-unionized, unskilled shift workers. They are subjected daily to rigid discipline, pressure, verbal abuse and intimidation from supervisors and even male co-workers. Their environments are both hazardous and stressful. A very important source of stress is productivity. Unequal gender relations at work also contribute to the stress of women. Yet these are not addressed A lot of corporate welfare activities, in fact, actually take advantage of these feminine stereotypes and prejudice. I have heard directly from the women workers , how they are being pressured to take part in beauty contests and how they hate it, and yet they feel pressured to go up on stage, and after that they feel horrible about it. Indeed the transnational corporations' exploitation of women's feminine characteristics are well known to us.

In the past twenty years there has been a lot of work with women workers in the FTZ on organizing for their rights. That is an important piece of work and that needs to be reinforced and consolidated. Compared to the earlier period of our organizing for women workers' rights, now, there has been more concern about the gender practical needs of women, like maternity leave, and so forth. That's important too. But that's also not enough, because many of us who have been involved not only in educational work

but in popular education which integrates organizing, realized that women who have been very much active in struggling for rights, in looking at higher wages, often feel very devastated personally, not because they are not capable, but from the constant attack and denigration that they encounter from their male union counterparts, from the supervisor, even from their own families, and from their own workmates. And this experience prompted me to explore the area of subjectivity.

What I want to elaborate a bit more now is the kind of denigration that these women experience from the community, from the society in general and also in the inter-personal relationships, whether at home or in the neighbourhood that they work in. In the local community, many of the women workers are subjected to ridicule, abuse and sexual harassment. There are called "mena caren" (hot stuff) or "joa mora" (cheap sale) to poke fun on and imply that factory women are loose, immoral and easily available sexually. They are made to feel that they are promiscuous, hence responsible for and shamed by the harassment inflicted on them.

Such incidents are very often endured in silence and accompanied by feelings of inferiority, because of the shame and blame that they bring onto the women themselves. For many the endurance of this humiliation is one of the most degrading experiences of factory life. Attempts to disregard and repress such derogation often deepen further the feelings of shame and inferiority, and that's why a lot of the women workers stick to themselves.

Factory women workers in Malaysia, like many of the South-East Asian countries are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. In general it is understood that factory girls are the ones who obtained poor grades in their public exams and are often stigmatized as stupid girls who failed the exams. They are the school drop-outs. Hence, the stereotype of academic failure is associated with factory work. Today many factory women are still ashamed to openly acknowledge that they are production operators in a factory. Most are embarrassed of their factory job and aspire to office work, even though office clerical work may not pay as much.

I would like to mention a few quotes to give you a sense of their feelings. "People look down on earth, they see us with only one eye". "Society looks disparagingly at us. They say factory girls are cheap, they fall for any man in the street". "I can feel the belittlement from the way they gawk at us". "My husband always complains that I am a lousy wife. For no reason he shouts at me. His shouting makes me very nervous and confused. No matter what I do, how hard I try to please him, it is never good enough. I feel so inadequate. Please tell me how to be a good wife". "My supervisor likes to shout at me: Stupid, why did your parents never teach you? Are you descendant of the stupid? If you think you cannot cope, the gate is wide open for you". "I get scolded all the time. Scolded until I don't know how to think. Again, I do not answer". A few more summaries: "I feel very frustrated and hate myself for being so useless. I never seem to be doing anything right, I am told all the time that I am good for nothing. I feel stupid and I do not know how to think any more. I have learned not to speak, not to feel, to disregard and appear oblivious. I just say I don't know".

Now the last part, which I had really wanted to talk a bit more is the whole question of subjectivity and how this constant emotional subordination is lived by the women, not just as a certain set of feelings, but in terms of being both, conscious and unconscious. It is the way they relate and feel about themselves and in terms how they relate with others. I use the term "subjectivity" to capture the essence of that meaning. Subjectivity here constitutes the individual sense of herself, the thoughts, the emotions, the being, the modes of understanding the world, the sense of personhood, your individuality. The uniqueness, the identity, especially the gender identity, the continuity and the reflective awareness of these things are also part of this. It refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the person, her sense of self and her ways of understanding her relation to herself and to the world.

So in my work with the women I have experimented with a very simple way (which the women's movements have always used) of reflective talking, story telling and sharing. It is crucial that we evoke repressed silences and feelings, to bring that out to the articulator, and in the process of articulation, to name it. I think it is important that women name their experiences as they experienced them, and not as others constructed them. In the process, we redefine and rename, and that helps in reconstructing and reconstituting your own subjectivity. It leads to recognizing your own self, your own worth, and not what others have constructed negatively of you.

When the women came to those sessions, many of them were reluctant, but when we started those sessions, they lasted for four or five hours. Even after a day's work, the women are keen to continue because it clicks, and makes many of them say that it is the first time in forty years of my life that I ever talked like that. And it is not just talking individually, that I want to stress here. It is talking in a small group, where others also experienced those kinds of situations, and something is working in them.

Addressing subjectivity, the being of the person in our educational work is an important part of education agenda for empowerment. And this is only one aspect. I am not saying it covers all of women's empowerment. I am still very concerned about the employment conditions and I want to stress that my current journey in looking at the subjectivity does not mean that I do not consider those aspects as important. I maintain that those aspects are vital and important. Material objective conditions have to be addressed. It is important, but it is not enough. Equally important is addressing subjectivities and examining experiences of the person. This is not just how you feel, not only your emotional being, but also your spirit as it affects the whole sense of your being, whether it be with yourself, in relation to others or to the world.

ENABLING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CHILE

Alejandra Valdez

Today I would like to share our educational practices in a women's school in Chile. In the last seven years, the Women's Institute, a non-governmental organization, has been carrying out these activities and it has brought us considerable success in the educational field. It is the experience of women during the democratic transition period after 18 years of dictatorship. During the eighties, popular education in Chile was linked to the support of people's organizations and to the many forms of the women's movement. This movement was linked to organisations dealing with survival strategies and human rights of women and especially the subject of repression which was our reality in Chile during the years of dictatorship.

We started to build up this school at the beginning of the transition period in the nineties where there were distinct needs that had to be met, for example new tools to confront public, collective, social, and political life which had changed during the years of dictatorship. This happened in a situation where the leading role women played in attaining democracy in our country was not reflected.

There was a huge demand for organizational help from women who wanted to get to know and use the decision making mechanisms and wanted to participate in the new requests for local power which were being lodged at the beginning of the transition period. Candidates for the Parliament were asking for help for the management of women's organizations, and women with different leadership posts were interested in decision making processes. They also said that they needed public-speaking skills especially in delivering speeches and proposals for change and for public politics.

For us, though, it was even more important to recognize and to accept the diversity of the new situation. We had experienced a change in which women had formed one unity against the dictatorship. Then the different political tendencies began to develop. This caused a situation of disillusionment and a lack of trust in most of the leaders who took powerful posts.

I will now talk about the specific education proposition and then discuss the analytical categories we proposed. Using an inter-disciplinary perspective, we came out with the following assumptions. First, to promote change means advocating changes in social, cultural and political institutions in Chile that produce and keep gender inequality. This implies that the issues present in the programme are seen from a perspective of cultural deconstruction and reconstruction. Second, we have to broaden the notion of politics to bring issues which are usually thought to be limited to women and to the private sphere into the legal frame. Furthermore, we have to bring them into the different public spheres. The third was to promote the development of a network for political support among women. Fourth, to elaborate the concept of diversity and its relationship to women's leadership with a

view to amplify the models available in our cultures so that women are no longer identical. Being identical refers to the situation we women live in. It is a situation - and this refers both to public and to private life - in which the one who leaves the flock is often punished by others. The one who leaves the group in order to exercise power in a public surrounding is often castigated or attacked by other women. This rivalry between women is a cultural phenomenon. This was the reason why we wanted to break up the uniformity of women and single out leading women with their distinct individual speeches, styles and projects. Finally, women had to confront the diversity of women's experiences and the complexity of their identities (being women, inhåbitants, mothers, workers, citizens, militants, daughters, wives, lovers, consumers, patients in the health system, etc.) and how this affected them. This knowledge about individual characteristics and many-sided definitions was then integrated into their way of leading.

While we believe that the different topics cannot be dissociated from each other, we separated them for methodological reasons in the sessions on sexual division of work and family. Nevertheless we have to emphasize that they are closely linked to each other when it comes to questions of content. The modules cannot be treated independently, but have to be linked to a thematic body which assigns them their special meaning. Transverse topics in the school were: gender, power, human rights of women, conflict and invisibility.

As developers of the modules, we adopted the attitude of a common search with participants. We promoted the free association of topics as a way to develop new meanings and tried to resuscitate the knowledge which comes up from deep subconscious levels in women (those taboos which are never consciously talked about or expressed by the women). By so doing, the team legitimized and promoted the forms of knowledge which combine emotions, reason and sensuality. This implies that attention needs to be paid to the different ways of women. What do they really communicate in a communication process? What is behind those processes? Various exercises are introduced to influence the images, the collective projections, the construction of stories, the construction of family history and the verbalization from personal memory, and also the historical memory of the country. These exercises are used as a means to save individual histories.

On the other hand, the participants are also asked to explore in each subject its symbolic content, the representations and hidden or latent meanings which this topic mobilizes in female leaders in our culture. This continuous work with language is meant to decode its ideological component and to initiate a more creative use.

In this education process we want to promote the processes and capacities of **individualization**, of speech and of singularization. It is understood as the capacity to perceive oneself as an individual, a positioning of oneself with one's own project and with the possibility to distinguish oneself from the collective possessions/characteristics or from instances which give identity. This has to do with the fact that women are often part of a collective identity and they speak according to this identity. They do not singularize their

individual participation and do not manifest their particular interests. The **proposing capacity** means that a person is able to express her needs and to provoke collective identities, to interpret the behaviour of others, to evaluate and diagnose situations creatively, and to name conflicts. Another aspect of this capacity is **visibility**. Visibility refers to the skills of everyone to construct her presence in public, to present her occupation of posts, and to recognize which steps have been advances and regressions in her leadership. By means of these public representations, she will be able to extricate herself satisfactorily. And this is important because the same structure can be observed in public spheres of power.

Women are often caught in the logic of sacrificing. This has to do with the cultural burden of having to - and being prepared to - work for others, serve others, and not to recognize one's own particular needs. Recognizing power in others and in oneself means learning to handle one's ambitions and desires; the capability to face conflicts means to recognize and accept the diversity of people and their different interests in public spheres.

We believe that it is very important to trigger off those processes in the education of women which enable them to get from the concept of **identity** to the concept of **individualization**. We have to emphasize that this individualization has nothing to do with the concept of mercantile individualization, which is propagated in the neoliberal system. Instead, it means differentiation from others, mobilization of one's own capacities, construction of a personal profile of one single reason, that of being social, as elaborated by Celia Amorós, a Spanish philosopher.

Women wish for a change in public opinion and the possibility to establish their identities in public, on the other hand they want to be perceived as citizens, as individuals with rights (and which are recognized as their own rights!). They want to legitimize their demands and their proposals to the community. Furthermore, they assume the existence of conflicts and recognize their own wishes and interests and develop strategies that help them to negotiate in different spheres of their actions.

It is important for women to recognize the complexity of the elements that support and legitimate power by visualizing links which make them an active part of the net of those powers which are in front of them. They need to diversify the ways of occupying posts and of producing effects in society and its dominating order.

In the end, we were able to make concrete suggestions and a reformulation of the programme - not only for adults and leaders, but also a reformulation of the programs and curricula of formal education (both primary and secondary). I mention this because girls are taught to express their desires in the different fields but these are challenged when they become adults. It therefore helps the girls, early in childhood, that they are able to imagine themselves in the public spheres.

DISCUSSION OF WORKSHOP 2

On the women's movement

Female Participant from Thailand: I must apologize for not using my own language, I'm not eloquent in English and it's very difficult thinking in two languages. I heard one speaker talk about women's movements. The movement has always called for rights, political rights or economic rights, but not enough for women's education. I think the integral part of any societal change is that of politics. Without participation and decision making in politics, women cannot reach our goal in bringing about equality between the sexes, or an equitable society. Yet, in calling for this to happen, the women's or feminist movement must recognize the significance of social or cultural aspects. Education is apparently one of them. In short, I suppose that women's movements or feminist movements must be aware of holistic problems.

On the importance of advocacy

Female Participant from India: This is more of a comment and an addition to what Vimala has already said. I've been engaged in the last few years in implementing a women's educational empowerment project in India. Based on experience over the last few years, many of the issues Vimala has raised confront us almost every day in the field. I have certain concerns I'd like to articulate, which I'm sure will be shared by others as well. The question that really arises is that I feel, and I don't think Vimala was suggesting it, I think one should not be looking towards governments to provide the solutions for women's education and girls' education.

Certainly they are essential in allocation of public funds, in providing infrastructure, but I think more crucially, I think we require some kind of a ground swell of pressure coming from civil society, from women's groups, from voluntary agencies. And my own experience, which has been fairly limited with the voluntary sector, has been that girls' education and women's education are not priority concerns of focus areas of work for the voluntary sector. It is not glamorous, it is tedious, it is slow, but programmes, for instance, of sustainable development of environment, of natural resource regeneration, all these get tremendous support from the voluntary sector. I mean these are the kinds of programmes I believe that they are engaged in on a large scale.

I think we have a particular concern in this area, at least in the case of India. I feel when we have very large foreign funded projects, which are coming into the country, whether it be for basic education, or for water, or on natural resource regeneration, all of which are premised on women being very crucial and critical players in implementing these projects. They assume that the social mobilization of women is a critical prerequisite for most of these projects. Women are to be mobilized, women are to be organized, and then women will be delivering these projects in a very cost- effective manner. It assumes that these women are educated and empowered. It is implicit somehow in the rhetoric of that particular

document. But I think those of us who are engaged in implementing these projects are really not paying sufficient attention to how an empowering education is going to take place.

So I feel while there is no single or uni-dimensional solution to these larger problems, it is neither a solution that can come from the government or from the top. It requires a multi-pronged approach, a multi-faceted strategy, in which certainly, I think, civil society needs to play a very crucial role. And I think Vimala's idea of advocacy needs to be worked out in really much greater detail. How is this advocacy going to take place? Who is going to initiate it? Because I think we've used words like advocacy a lot, and we somehow believe that the usage of the word in itself resolves the problem. And I think to be able to get women's education onto a social agenda, there is a kind of a social movement around the ideas of women's education and girls' education. I believe it's the focus that people like Vimala and Vincent who is sitting behind me, who's also from India, or myself, or women's groups or voluntary groups need to address themselves to.

Thais Corral, Chairperson (TC) Thank you very much, and I think if I may say, I think that the media is also a crucial actor for that, because the role of the media in making public opinion is very important. They think that normally the media reflect the trends of society but they do not imagine that the media do not address too much those problems in India.

On the impact of AIDS on women

My name is Salomé, from FAWE, and I am bringing an issue that was discussed passingly in a lot of the presentations, the phenomenon of AIDS and its implications on girls' and women's education. Most of the experience in my country, Kenya is that the married woman is becoming more vulnerable in the issue of AIDS. Her employment, no matter how many degrees she has, and how much education she has, has not given an issue of empowerment when it comes to negotiations on the marital commitments. That is one area where AIDS waits for her in her marriage bed and what can be done about it. Two, is the fact that when men do not want to change their behaviour, even with all the education and all the awareness, they tend to move to younger girls for their partners. What are the implications for girls' education especially where one finds that a younger girl's cohort has higher AIDS incidents than a cohort of boys in the same age group. What are the implications? Then there is also the issue of students (usually these are the young girls) who take up the burden of siblings.

On AIDS education

I think we can talk about women's and girls' education, especially in Africa, where I'm aware of the case more than the other parts of the world country, and examine what kind of messages are sent in the awareness-raising and education campaigns for AIDS. Does it have an empowering component? Does it raise gender issues? Does AIDS affect men and women the same way, although both of them die from it? How are we, who are in women's and girls' education, going to take up the opportunity of the funding, that is available for the AIDS education, to make sure that we bring about a difference in the girls' education and in the women's education and their empowerment.

TC: I think you raised a very important issue, regarding education and also other aspects of life, especially one that is now a serious problem in most of our countries, that of the AIDS epidemic.

On prioritizing education in the social movements

Vimala Ramachandran: I would like to first respond to what my friend from Thailand said. I was talking about the women's movement not taking up education as an important issue in the specific context of South Asia. While it is important for the women's movement to talk about politics and rights, (and of course, there are other movements who address themselves to disadvantaged communities in India, tribal communities, workers, peasants), education has not been on the priority list of most of these movements. Even though all of us recognize that there is a very close link between provisional education and the politics of it.

Divergent prioritization for basic education in South Asia and Southeast Asia

I completely agree with you there, that it is after all a political question. That is why I said that the fact that education has not become such a priority in South Asia is because politically it was not in the interest of the people who are in power to promote education, and this is where I think we need to compare between South Asia and South East Asia. For instance, after the war, and especially in the fifties, sixties and seventies, this kind of emphasis was given to universal basic education in South East Asia. Compared to South Asia, there is a vast difference.

In the last five years, I have had the opportunity to visit Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Cambodia is a different story, but Laos and Vietnam, even during the peak of the war, even when they were fighting the war, never lost their focus on education. Even if they could not pay the teachers in rural areas, as long as they could find someone to teach, every child went to school. I also saw how education was such an important priority politically for China and for South East Asian countries. But India has just lagged behind like Pakistan and Bangladesh. So it is a question of how politics of this region, and even the politics of the people who are in protest movements, somehow, I do not know really why, but education never got really pushed on the agenda.

Going beyond policy

Linked to the point of my colleague from India, advocacy is a very difficult word but it is also a very easy word to say. What I was trying to explain is that we have tried all kinds of things in the region. In fact one of the most frustrating aspects of doing this study of South Asia was, that any solution anybody offers is there in policy documents. You can find it in government of India's policy, you can find it in the policy of the government of Pakistan, you can find it in the Bangladesh government policy documents. Anything progressive that you can dream of is there.

Now, where do we go after that? You know we have all the right documents. So the whole question is that we really need to agree

and we really need to mobilize public opinion, the media and the people in power, to bring education on the agenda. This is in fact an appropriate time, because at one level we are talking of a global market, and India is very much part of the global market, in the educated global market, I should say. Indians, you'll find them everywhere, you'll find Pakistanis everywhere, you'll find that Bangladesh is everywhere, you'll find Nepal is everywhere, in important positions, in industry, in the UN, everywhere. So there is a kind of globalization of the educated.

But somehow, when you talk of the majority of the people, they cannot compete with the global market. They can not compete with the quality of productivity, the quality of whatever we do in the global market without education. So you have multinational corporations, big industries coming to those areas where the most educated are employed. On the other hand, in those places where educational levels are still low, you do not have anything coming in, so you have a tremendous imbalance between one part of India and another. And the same in Pakistan, there are parts of Pakistan that are really in a very difficult situation, compared to other more advanced parts of Pakistan.

So what I am really driving at is we need to think of a different kind of advocacy. I don't know what it is, but I do feel the time is right for people involved in education, especially in Asia. To push it, like we have never done before, really give it a push and bring it on the agenda. I'd just like to add one more - you know the NGO sector in South Asia, this was another frustrating aspect of doing a review of what is happening in education. There are very, very few NGOs really committed to education. Education is either an entry point or a kind of visible activity, but it is not priority. So we are not blaming anybody, we are just saying somehow, if you compare South Asia with the rest of the world (and I really enjoyed what our friend from Africa was saying) with the case in Africa, where there is increasing involvement and increasing educational access, the growth in Africa is much faster than in South Asia. Even though South Asia has all the facilities, the personnel, the people to teach. It is a combination of political commitment and quality of education.

I agree with you, the quality of adult education is so poor, that the people who become literate, relapse into illiteracy in six months. You just don't have the ability to sustain it. So where is the problem? The problem is at various levels and in fact I was just sharing our own sense, because we in India feel we are at a point, at a crossroads really, because we know that this is a problem, but we are actually grappling on how to move ahead, and we are not finding the right partners.

Alejandra Valdez

On making proposals and having political power to back these

On the other hand I would like to emphasize a few things that we have to look at in the construction of civil society and the implications on the educative processes for women . I think it is tremendously important to give continuity to the educative processes between women. I believe that we have strengthened the women's movement by bringing in the issue of education. We are talking today in this conference that in itself allows us to look at the political and educative processes that we have lived in the women's movement during the last decades.

But I also believe that in the educational system of all our countries, discrimination and domination still persist. For this, I believe that today we have the important role to make proposals for change, make political proposals and, for me equally important, to elaborate our practices, elaborate on our ways of working, follow-up models that give continuity to our work. I believe that it is in this manner that we could certainly influence other and could replace those old and conservative schemes of looking at things. In some ways, the proposals that we have made in the women's movement, in the environmental movement, in the labour movement, as we can see, remain still big challenges ahead. I believe that if we are unable to insert ourselves politically, our actions in our countries will not produce any real cultural change.

TC: Okay, there was an important issue raised about how to mobilize or to have some creative strategies to mobilize for AIDS, that came from our sister from Kenya. Now there is a suggestion here from Lean, that maybe somebody in the audience has experience on AIDS education that could be shared.

More on AIDS education

My name is **Martine** and I am with the **Swiss delegation**. I just wanted to say something about Aids, because it's related to the general subject of education of women not being a main problem and a main issue. In Switzerland there was a campaign last year focused on women and AIDS, because the decision-makers noticed that AIDS was growing in the female population. Especially the young girls who had no means and no power to negotiate with their male partners to wear a condom. So the policy of AIDS was really focused on women, because it is being considered now as an important issue, otherwise we will have no women to bear the babies anymore. I want to say that for the first time, the government treated a female campaign as priority, and this they did because they were conscious that it was vital for the population.

Carol from UIE: It is unfortunate that Usa, who was with us in Chiangmai, is unable to share her work on AIDS education and its implications for women. I will try to explain briefly what we have discussed in this meeting as well as my little knowledge of the situation. Now in the world, we have reached the fifth wave, as far as AIDS is concerned. In the first wave, in the 1980s it was the gays. Then you had the drug addicts, then the prostitutes, which were the marginalized people. So in the AIDS campaign during that time, AIDS was treated as a stigma, and associated with these marginalised, so called bad and immoral people. But now, after the fourth wave, you have the fifth wave affecting the wives and the children. So now you see a shift, as far as the images of AIDS. So now they portray AIDS with a human face.

I think it is important for us to be able to appreciate that the work that has been going on, even to the extent that we, as educators, look at people with AIDS, because these five categories of people with AIDS also affect our understanding and also the images that we want to project. For example, how does religion affect AIDS education. In the Philippines, where the Catholic church has an important role, the church is so much involved in AIDS education. But in their programmes they do not mention anything about condoms. And we know that condoms are one of the most effective ways of

preventing AIDS. How do you grapple with all these religious factors?

And also how do we treat AIDS education from the gender perspective? How do you look at women's sexuality? I think it is a very complex thing and I think it is important for us to be able to relate the politics and religion, and at the intimate level, how we treat sexuality. How we as educators look at sexuality? It is unfortunate again that a woman who is supposed to be representing UN AIDS was supposed to be here in the conference and she was supposed to have a special session on how to develop AIDS education programmes. And when I heard about her, work it was actually trying to discuss how sexuality should be an important component, because many of the AIDS prevention programmes again talk about control.

On the strategy of integrating men in our work

My name is **Anastasia Nakasy** from **Uganda** where I am the Secretary for the Uganda National Commission for UNESCO. I'm sorry, I've just come in, I've been to another group, but I had a message, which I had wanted to share with this group. If you have already covered it, please excuse me. What I wanted to share is from experience, and it is related to gender issues in education. In Uganda we have UNESCO club movements which work on holistic approach to community development, which includes basic education, literacy, AIDS education and all that. But the message I wanted to put across is that we have shifted our strategies from addressing women and girls in a segregated manner, and we have discovered that in developing countries and poor communities like ours, the men, are in as much need as the women, and it seems so far that the men are the deciders and the providers. The women need the support of men.

So, our strategy now is holistic and it has integrated the men and the women, the boys and the girls. We address them together and found that many will become more positive to the different roles of the women and are getting ready to support them to compromise and face their challenges. If we only involve women, all along we have had women's clubs, women's groups and you talk about your problems, then it is very difficult for the women to go back home and say, our club has taught us that. Then the men will say , " you women only talk about us" and they adopt an aggressive attitude. So this has worked in our setting. Let us be transparent and address the gender issues in the presence of both men and women so that they are informed and sensitized, and in the process grow to appreciate each other's different roles and get support from each other.

TC: Thank you very much for sharing with us your own experience. I would just like to highlight that we have been in a woman's caucus since Monday and as your country, Uganda, is one of the countries that is at the bureau of this conference, we would like very much to have your solidarity to present to your minister the amendments that the women are willing to present to the final documents of this country. So, on behalf of the caucus I would like to give you a copy of our amendments and thank you very much for coming here.

Still on AIDS education

My name is **Sara Longwe** and I represent **FEMNET**, an African women's development and communication network. Like the last speaker I was held up somewhere. I will just make comments on what I heard so far. First is following up on AIDS. I have also been involved in this area where we developed a training manual on gender and AIDS. This is targeted at the men, because most of the AIDS national commission are all full of men, who are gender blind, and there are a few women there, who are equally gender blind, because they do not look at the AIDS issue from a gender perspective. They are just seeing it as a moral issue as something that is an individual's problem. So there are these packages. I think different organizations are coming up with different packages.

What I would say is, as one of advocacy, if you have anything you know, be part of that drawing up of the package, even if you do not know anything about how to draw the package, if you know who is drawing up the package, give the information, so they are included, because they always look for so-called experts, because the expert maybe has the technical approach, whereas in the field we actually deal with people with AIDS or HIV, we would like to see a different package. So from my experience, I had to work with the people who are working in the field, and I learned a lot.

More on Advocacy

Secondly I wanted to comment on the advocacy, and where we put the gender issues. For me, I think women's education should be everywhere. Whenever they are drawing up a budget, we mount it and we take it as an opportunity for doing education for women. In South Africa, they have come up with a gender budget, which does not mean you have separate budgets, but it means you have to look at who is utilizing the money and where has the money come from. In that way we can be able to find the money and look at who are the beneficiaries of education. So what I am saying is that gender issues in adult education should be put in every opportunity that we find. It becomes an adult education agenda. The last thing I would like to say is, at the moment there is this civic education on democracy coming everywhere, and it is not talking about gender democracy. You look at all the civic educations that are going on and they are all about getting into power, and when women come in and say they need leadership skills, we have all skills that we have. All we need to do is to really change the system of the so-called democratization process, because at the moment, it is seen through the man's eyes. So what I heard on the advocacy is that, as adult educators, we should turn every opportunity into a learning process.

On creative pedagogy

My name is **Sebeda** from **South Africa** . I am not directly involved with AIDS education work but I do sit on the board for a programme, which works with AIDS group through African research and educational puppetry programme. They use puppets, creative models of puppets, and they go round the townships in South Africa and use it as a form of popular education. It has worked very successfully because they have not separated men from women necessarily. If you go to an area, a crowded shopping centre or into a high school, boys and girls actually see the programme together, and after the programme, questions are actually invited. This group has also gone

out of South Africa to many other countries, where in fact they do training with local people, if people are interested, particularly in the puppetry aspects and then local people raise cultural issues. So if you are interested, I could give you the details and you might want to share their work with others.

On importance of coordination

Participant: I speak normally in French but I will try to put my English in a correct sense. I would like to thank and congratulate all the panelists for this interesting session, but I would like to give just a piece of advice. I am a former minister of women's affairs and I would like to cite my experiences since, as the lady from India stated, there are some failures, and we have to tackle the matters because we have not been very successful until now. But I think also that in the high level, there is no coordination between the Ministries of Education and Women Affairs. I do not know what is going on in the English speaking African part, but in the French speaking part of Africa, things are not very coordinated. Since we are fighting against cultural matters, cultural mentality, it is important to coordinate everything concerning women education. Otherwise I think we cannot reach all the targets

On the push-pull factors of women's literacy

Manji Kalualia from Penjab University, India: I would like to add a few things from the fields experiences we have gathered. First of all, as we know that a maximum of the learners are women in our literacy centres, and we cater to the female literacy in a big way. To encourage them to come to the centres, we have tried different programmes, and we have succeeded in a few, but we have not been able to conquer the whole campaign based on the female literacy that way. But I will go into some of our experiences. We always feel that, whenever we are taking women into the centres, there are always some forces acting on them, which are always pushing them, and some are always pulling them. So in the pushing forces we can see that the family plays a big role, the society plays a big role, the environment plays a big role. And due to our traditional cultural society, this communication is not built up in them. What I mean to say is that, even if they want to attend the literacy centres, they are stopped by the mother-in-law, sister-in-law, or the husband, so that they are not able to get a level of awareness, where the problems in the house can be creative for them. So to avoid that, they discourage their females to come to the literacy centres. Of course, we know that if they come to the literacy centres, we will work for their empowerment. But these forces, the pushing forces are there, which have to be worked upon and need to be looked after. Then there are the pulling forces, which pull the learner or the female to the centres. I would consider the pull factors as the centre itself, the physical environment in the centre, the volunteer who is teaching, the material that we are giving to the learner.

On using our privileged position for deprived women

Essi Sutherland Addy: Thank you very much! I have had a real learning experience here. I just want to make the comment, that with respect to advocacy, I do believe that it is very important to network with people who are doing the same kind of work. Many of us are in fact in very privileged positions

and we must use those positions to make sure that other women and girls make it, and that is the essence of the organization that I belong to. We see a continent-wide linkage as one of the most effective things to do, and we have already run into the trouble where people say, "Oh my God, there's FAWE, we better be careful what we say!" And I don't mind that, really. Now with respect to the issues, however, it is true that regarding the question of marginalization of adult education, I think that there are probably other panels talking about issues like using indigenous languages, and so on. We didn't have time to talk about that, but I think we must go and continue looking at those issues. Because we use indigenous language in adult education, you find that the women are outside the mainstream, and the coordination of these policies has got to be very clear. I think the final point I would make is that for as long as women's reproductive capacities are seen to be more valuable than their productive capacities, the job is not over.

On the multi-faceted nature of our educational work

Lean Chan Heng: There are two or three things that came out of this discussion and point very clearly, that when we are engaged in educational work, whether it is with women or men or children, and whether it is at the level of policy formulation or grass-roots organizing, it is very important to look at the multi-facets and the multi-dimensions of the particular groups of life, respective whether it is in terms of specific problems. In terms of questions about AIDS, I think these are very real problems and they have to be addressed in our educational work, whether it's just literacy, or whether it is part of some mobilization work. The challenge is how to integrate the different aspects. There is a need for reconceptualizing based on the specific cultural groups and the specific sectorial groups that we are involved in. Another point that comes very clearly is the question of strategies and advocacy. Educational work is not just doing education there and then, between two to three or three to five, it expands beyond that. There's a whole structure and organization. We need to figure out how to get access, how to sustain that kind of activity, how to reach out. So there is a whole lot of things that we need to think about, when we talk about organizational work. And, like the questions of strategies and advocacies, we have to address all these different levels.